# Anandalahari



**Interpretation of the first 41 verses of Adi Shankaracharya's *Saundarylahari***
**With teachings by Swami Rama and commentary by Jim Danisch (Satya Dev)**

# *Wave of Bliss, Wave of Beauty*



Lalita Tripurasundari

**Interpretation of Shankaracharya's *Saundaryalahari*, sourced from English translations by Nataraja Guru, Norman O. Brown, Swami Tapasyananda and P.R. Ramachander**

**I am grateful for the teachings of Swami Rama, especially his *Saundaryalahari* video series; the teachings of Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati; and insight into the energies of the deities from Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism.* All this has helped to decode Shankara's poetry and make the practice real. None of the work would have happened without Shakti, shining through the veils of perception.**

**By Jim Danisch (Satya Dev)**

**Introduction**

I became interested in Saundaryalahari in 1983, when I was staying in Kathmandu. I found a copy of the book in English (I think it was Ramachander's version), but found the translation awkward, so decided to put it into my own words as best I could, not knowing Sanskrit or much of the meaning behind the imagery. Saundaryalahari is a well-known presentation of Shri Vidya Samaya (internal) Tantra, written by Adi Shankaracharya, a great Indian saint who (perhaps) lived from 788 CE - 821 CE .

What inspired me to pursue this was Shankara's devotional intensity towards the Mother Goddess, and the knowledge that Saundaryalahari was a favorite of Swami Rama, who my wife and I were visiting often at his newly completed Hansda Ashram outside Kathmandu. I made line drawings for many of the verses. That first effort got lost over the intervening years, and I became involved in other work.

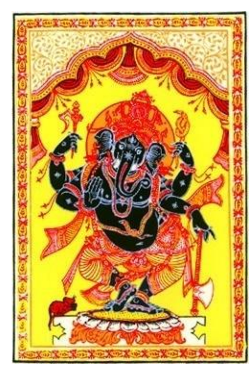
My mind came back to Saundaryalahari very strongly in 2007, so with time to devote to it in February 2009; I decided to try again, this time working with four different translations and a lot of years of experience and meditation to help intuit more of the meaning. Clearly, the seeds that Swami Rama had planted were sprouting and growing.

I am not a Sanskrit scholar, I make no claims to accuracy, am sure that I have made many mistakes in understanding, and have stretched the meaning in many cases. But my aim is not to produce a scholarly text, but simply to aid myself and perhaps others in their sadhana, while at the same time making the English contemporary. Of the four translations, I found the most useful to be Swami Tapasyandana's, with its expanded translation and clear commentary. Nataraja Guru was helpful with his word by word translation from Sanskrit to English (actually added by one of his students), but his commentary seems very forced into a spatial/mathematical analysis, which does not always clarify. The other two were not so useful.

Om mantra and Shri Yantra are equivalents of sound and light. Om contains the three cities of waking, dreaming, and sleeping; plus She who lives in all three cities: known as Tripura Sundari, Lalita, Sodhasi, etc., symbolizing the energy of Shakti. Her Yantra is the Shri Yantra; and meditation on that image is an inner pilgrimage that takes the Seeker through nine levels to the center, each representing a more subtle aspect of existence until the bindu is reached, and beyond. Then back into the world of time/space, name, form, number, etc., now with the knowledge of how it arises.

Why Divine Mother, and not Divine Father? This is not just because the philosophy originated with men. Shiva and Shakti are one, but it is in the illusion of their separateness that the world of name and form originates. It is Shakti, the essential energy that permeates everything, that moves toward Shiva, who is understood as the motionless eternal principle. Giving birth to the universe, She is Mother of all.

My further interest in all this was as part of planning a physical pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash in Tibet, which led to discovering the semi-mythological origin of the verses. The story, which has many versions, has it that for one reason or another Shankara disappeared from his place in Varanasi for a short time. It may have been out of desperation to know Divine Mother. He was transported to Mt. Kailash, where he found the verses of *Saundaryalahari* written on a wall or perhaps the mountainside. As he started to write them down, Ganesh appeared and began to erase them from the bottom, to prevent him from publishing them in the world. Thus he was only able to write down the first forty-one verses, which make up *Anandalahari* (Wave of Bliss). He then made up another fifty-nine to total one hundred, *Saundaryalahari* (Wave of Beauty).



**Ganesh**

Going to Kailash could just be another trek in beautiful mountains, but the purpose of pilgrimage is to relate the outer journey to the inner journey, using a symbolic map rather than a topographic map. Mt. Kailash, as the Meru Danda, the axis Mundi of the world of name and form, is the externalization of the Seeker's axis Mundi – the subtle spine. In both worlds, Shiva is imagined at the top, and Shakti at the base. Journey's end is the realization that Shiva and Shakti are one at the top. The first forty-one verses describe the process leading to union on several different levels, revealing the internal practice.

This practice is concisely presented by Swami Rama in a series of lectures he videotaped at the Himalayan Institute in Honesdale, Pennsylvania in 1993. These lectures are currently available on YouTube (search for swamiramahimalayas, then view the series title Shri Vidya). The practice does not make use of any of the verses, or the Shri Yantra. It is purely internal. As with most of what Swami Rama taught, it is distilled to the simplest essentials, the most direct path.

Here is what I wrote after returning from Tibet:

The difference between going on a hike and going on a pilgrimage is one of intention and perception, as it aligns with the emphasis on external and internal, exoteric and esoteric experiences. The physical act of walking provides the benefits of exercise, clears the mind, and refreshes, and uses a topographic map as its guide. Traditional long pilgrimages, such as Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar in Tibet, are guided by a symbolic map that, if followed with the

intent of seeking union with the divine, provides an internal, esoteric process to help the seeker find the way.

Kailash, for South Asia, has traditionally been the most prominent symbol for the axis mundi, the still axis around which the world of name and form revolves, the expression in the macrocosm of the subtle spinal column which the yogi understands as the path to union of Shakti and Shiva, or enlightenment. (Not the only this particular axis mundi, since there are an infinite number of them: for example, all temples are constructed around an axis mundi.)

When embarking on a pilgrimage, Swami Rama advised the use of an appropriate practice at three levels: before beginning the actual pilgrimage, then during the pilgrimage, and after the pilgrimage. For Kailash, what appeared to best serve was Shankaracharya's Saundaryalahari, which has many different levels of symbolic meaning, depending on the seeker's capacity. Written in classic Sanskrit poetry, when "decoded" they describe the process of Kundalini Yoga leading to enlightenment with the union of Shiva and Shakti. Throughout the verses, metaphors of mountains and deities describe the progression through the chakras to final union.

Our pilgrimage began outside Kathmandu where our group of five meditated, read from Saundaryalahari, practiced mantra and walking, and learned basic asanas to help with the journey, for ten days.

We flew to Humla in NW Nepal, and walked for two weeks through Limi Valley to the Tibetan border. The landscape is steep valleys crowned by snow peaks, unruly rivers, trails that often led to cliff-hanging stone steps with sheer drops of thousands of feet. At the end of May, we experienced snow and wind, sunshine and showers, heat and bitter cold. There were also glorious plays of light and cloud, banks of pink azaleas, and almost pristine forests. All of us were tested to our physical limits buy terrain and altitude. Without horses we would not have made it, and without mantra the mind could easily go to negativity. It was difficult to maintain meditation or asana practice, but we did continue to read a verse of Saundaryalahari almost every day.

Once in Tibet, these difficulties continued. In the end, none of us felt able to do the full circumambulation of the mountain. Instead, we visited what is probably one of the Himalayan Tradition's ancestral caves at Chugu Gompa, if Pandit Rajmani is correct. Each member of our group had a different outer/inner experience. Everyone came up against physical limitations, many samskaras, and some helpful insights. Personally, I had no particular response to the lake or the mountain. What supported the trip the most was Guru mantra. The practice after the trip is to get back to what I was doing before it. Hard to say if it is different or not, but it is clear that I have no further interest in external pilgrimage. I will not comment on others' experiences.

In the end, Swami Rama's Saundaryalahari videos present the practice explicitly for **those who have done the preparation**.

On with the journey!

Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati (a disciple of Swami Rama) writes: “We are passionate, living beings, and that is a most beautiful, positive thing if we allow it to be. Is the desire for that highest union, by whatever name You call it, including the union of Shakti with Shiva, something involving mind? Yes, absolutely.

“However, most of our desires of passion have their roots in the primitive fountains or urges of

food, sleep, sex, and self-preservation. Those arise only after avidya or ignorance, forgetting our true nature. Out of those primitive urges arise the particularized samskaras or deep impressions that are colored with attraction or aversion, based on our past experiences of pain and pleasure. Those come to life as active, felt desires.

“However, this desire for union comes from a far deeper place. It is the faint remembrance, so to speak, of the Home we have left behind when we projected outward from our true essence of pure consciousness, level after level, layer after layer, until we appear to have "become" this individualized human being who seeks and longs for this and that, mostly settling for substitutes for that which we really want. When that one finest, truest, deepest desire awakens it uses the same instruments of ahamkara (ego), manas (sensory-motor mind) and indriyas (senses and actions) as do all of the other desires. This desire is to be fully honored, cultivated, honed, refined, and lived, with its fire given ever more fuel to burn with a greater and greater glow of light. It is the fire that burns away the obstacles and the light that shows the way to its source. It is always there, like that (metaphorically) ever present gravity that quietly, surely pulls.

Is this one desire like the other countless desires? In some ways, yes. But in that one nameless other way, it stands alone. Please, my friends, let that desire pull You Home.”

**Here begins *Anandalahari (Wave of Bliss). I’ve re-written all of the verses in my own words, interpreted each verse, incorporated a teaching of Swami Rama from his four video lectures on Saundaryalahari, and added an illustration from my lifetime of ceramic work, which would not have been possible without Her light shining through. For those of you who want to refer to Swami Rama’s video lectures, I’ve put the approximate time into the lecture. All of the verses are published on www.scribd.com.***

***V.1***
***Shiva united with Shakti is able to manifest the worlds.***
***Separated, he is unable to even imagine movement.***
***So how can one who has not attained direct knowledge of the One, bow down or praise You my Goddess,***
***Who is praised by even Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma?***

Shiva and Shakti are always united in non-duality, in undifferentiated consciousness, from which the world of name and form – Maya – originates. It is only in the veiled world of duality that they appear to be separate.



Shiva and Parvati on Mt. Kailash

How does this Maya arise? The Sanskrit word is *spand*, which does not have a direct English equivalent, but roughly corresponds to the first hint of vibration in undifferentiated consciousness: Brahman, Atman, the Absolute. That vibration is the first separation of consciousness, the first manifestation of energy. Beyond that the intellect cannot travel.

Shiva, as the male principle in the manifestation of the universe, is completely inert when he is separated from Shakti.

All the stuff of the mind – waking, dreaming and deep sleep states -- is made of the combination of male and female, positive and negative, elements, along with the **relationship between them**; therefore the importance of the Trinity, usually portrayed as a triangle, representing the three gunas – Rajas, Tamas and Sattva. Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma are symbolic representations of these qualities of energy, out of which all Maya is spun. In our spiritual work towards realizing Atman, or the center of consciousness from which we all come, we seek to attain union internally.

In the Chakra system, we place the knowledge of Shiva (Tamas) at Sahasrara, Shakti (Sattva) at Muladhara, and Brahma (Rajas) as the relationship between them, first joining Shiva and Shakti in Anahata, then raising them to Ajna (still dual, but now pure duality without coloration) and finally through Bindu to Sahasrara (non-dual, Atman). She Who contains all of this is the Goddess, Shakti, known by many names, but in Shri Vidya known predominantly as Tripura Sundari (Tri = three, pura = city).

In the system of Kundalini Yoga which these teachings describe, Shakti is asleep in the root chakra (Muladhara), and Shiva is deep in meditation at the crown chakra (Sahasrara). It seems to me that only when we become aware that Shiva and Shakti are seemingly separated can Kundalini awake. In our ignorance of this, there is no tension, no attraction, no pull toward our highest potential – only lower desires.

So the Seeker's first work is to wake up enough to become conscious of apparent separation, to recognize that lower desires never can be satisfied, to realize that all lower desires lead to one ultimate desire that is to be cherished. We cannot function at all without some manifestation of Shakti, so it only requires a slight parting of the veils of ignorance to recognize this. Even the smallest spark of Shakti starts the Seeker's journey.

About 40 minutes into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: "*Therefore, first part, first awareness that teacher creates is awareness is that Mother Divine is within you.*

*You know there is a word, "Shiva," it's a Sanskrit word. It is written like this. (Writes on blackboard). If you only remove this part (removes vowel "i") it becomes "Shava" and becomes dead—corpse. Without Shakti, there is no existence of Shiva.*

*Then second step, teacher makes him aware that Shiva and Shakti are one and the same.*

*For strengthening that awareness, you'll have to systematically understand the point of focus in your body, in yourself. If you concentrate here, (navel center) or concentrate here (heart center) or concentrate here (between eyebrows) that will make a difference. If you concentrate on muladhara, the lowest chakra, that will make a difference. Then teacher, according to your state of mind, will give you [the focal point].*

*The science of chakras is superficially mentioned in the books. You all have heard about the founder of Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, and those two, three people – Blavatsky, Leadbeater, Olcott --. Through their literature, West found out about the science of chakras. But any book I pick up, I find complete distortion. Who will systematically pursue this subject, so that you learn to understand and think about yourself? When you learn something about yourself, teacher says, "You are talking only about this small figure; you are not talking about the universe."*

*Then he imparts the knowledge of macrocosm and microcosm. Pinda and Brahman. Pinda is this body—the mind is the universe. What is the difference between the drop of water and the ocean? They are qualitatively one and the same. But they are not quantitatively one and the same. Once you understand the very summum bonum of your life, the very existence of this life, this individual, which is not body, which is not breath, not at all senses, which is not your thinking process, including your emotions, appetites and inclinations—which is beyond this. Beyond means not far away—within you. Whole philosophy and its dictionary changes. Beyond, if you tell, it's beyond your reach. It means it's far away in India, Himalayas, Tibet or somewhere. Beyond means the senses are beyond your body; the mind is beyond your senses; the soul is beyond your mind. It's within. The whole concept is in this."*

Swami Rama's translation of the verse, thanks to Nandini Avery's notes on his evening prayers at the Himalayan Institute, Honesdale, PA. She only has three verses. "The unmanifested reality can manifest itself only with the help of Mother Divine. All the forces are under Her command. Without Her help God is not able even to stir. Is it possible for the aspirants who have not performed good karma either to worship or to praise thee, O Mother, Who are worshipped even by the three great powers of creation, protection, and destruction?"



**Dark Triangle 1974. Earthenware, plumbers' tape, 5ft W X 6ft.**

***V. 2***
***The tiniest speck of dust arising from Your lotus feet***
***Is formed into all the worlds by Brahma.***
***Vishnu's great serpent Shesa barely can support it,***
***And Shiva, shattering the dream, rubs the ashes on his body*.**

Here is the spanda, the spontaneous vibration in undifferentiated consciousness, the small spark of Shakti mentioned above (V.1): the speck of dust, the Bindu, creation. Creation must be sustained, symbolized by the great serpent that Vishnu, the Preserver sleeps on, floating on the cosmic sea. What is created must return to where it came from.

How does the universe arise? First there is only Brahman/Atman/the Absolute/Pure Consciousness, etc. Out of this, somehow undifferentiated energy manifests into a point (Bindu) without any attributes -- no time, no space -- that arises from She-who-lives-in-the-three-cities of Waking, Dreaming and Sleeping: Shakti, essential energy that pervades all three, that permeates all creation.

From the bindu emerge Space, Time and the relationship between them. These are the three gunas: Tamas, Rajas and Sattva -- personified in the world of form as Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu.

Brahma as creator is Rajas or movement, and creates all the stuff of the perceptible world, Maya.

Vishnu as Sattva or Preservation, is portrayed sleeping on a thousand-headed serpent named Shesa, or “Remainder”. Remainder of what? -- the dream of the universe that dissolved before this one could be created. So the expansion from Bindu creates more matter than even the great serpent can support easily.

Shiva as Tamas or dissolution, then has the necessary role of transforming matter into ashes, completing the birth, life, death cycle. And the play of life begins and ends again and again.

To restate this slightly differently:

Out of the bindu, the first manifestation is energy/Shakti, also equated with Prana. From this arise cohesion (Vishnu/Sattva), disintegration (Shiva/Tamas) and the balance between them (Brahma/Rajas). So Shakti is the energy that manifests the three gunas and is in all three. In this sense she is supreme – the theme that permeates *Saundaryalahari*.

Sattva and Tamas are two sides of a coin, in that they feed each other, one transforming into the other through the action of Rajas. When the gunas are understood as the threads that make up a rope, endlessly intertwined – “the golden braid” -- it is easier to understand that Tamas and Sattva are constantly interchanging.

Shiva as darkness and deep sleep is the disintegration of all individual, differentiated existence: liberation from all that binds. The other side of this is automatically, and at the same time, Vishnu (dream) – the binding power of concentration that brings light and preservation. Brahma as Rajas (awareness) can be understood as the vibration that both separates and unites Tamas and Sattva.

Paraphrasing John Woodroffe, “Without the great Daughter-of-the-Mountain (Parvati), ever

glorified as his supreme dread energy, the corpse of Rudra (Shiva) is never worshiped. This primordial goddess is known as 'the coiled,', Kundalini. Her substance is Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. She envelops Shiva with her three and a half veils (waking, dreaming, sleeping, Turiya -- JD)…Only because he is united with Energy is the eternal lord of sleep a doer of actions." – *The Serpent Power*

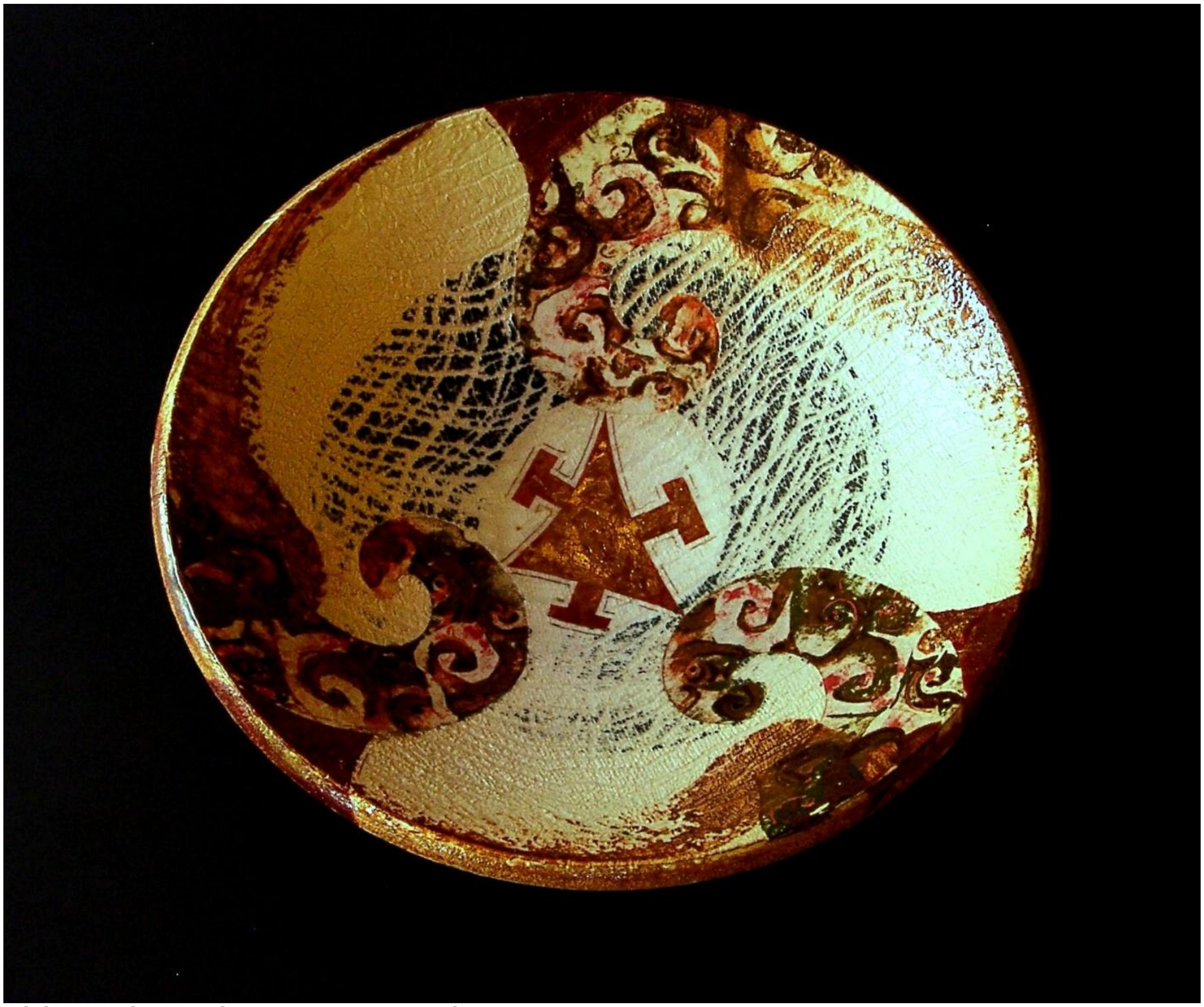
As the dream of Vishnu becomes more and more solid, matter as it devolves is characterized by greater and greater mutual impenetrability of particles; i.e. from Space to Air to Fire to Water to Earth, down the spine.

In meditation practice, we need all three gunas operating together in harmony, in order to establish sushumna, go beyond the gunas and realize She-Who-Lives-in-the-Three-Cities. We tend to think that Sattva is more desirable than Tamas or Rajas, but it cannot exist alone. Often, it is not until we are in a state of Tamasic standstill, at the "end of our rope" that grace descends. The gunas resolve in stillness.

Swami Rama says about 55 min into Lecture 1 of Saundaryalahari: *"But remember you find two forces. One is called ascending force, another is called descending force. What is ascending force? Human effort. What is descending force? Grace of the lord. These two are misinterpreted. Many of us sit down and say lord bless me. He says: 'What have you done? You lazy bum. You don't do anything. I am prepared to bless you, come on do something and then I'll bless you.' When all your human efforts are exhausted, you don't have any other way of doing anything, you don't find any source to it, suddenly you burst out 'lord help me', grace dawns."*

Swami Rama says in Lecture 3 after 1hr 35min.: "*Devotion. What for do you want to devote, what for do you want to worship? To attain nearness. You want to attain nearness. You want to be, to know, and see that devatma Shakti very closely. Closely. Face to face. So there is another school that is called Samaya. Many western writers did not know what it was because we don't impart this knowledge to everybody."*

The Seeker, solidly seated in meditation, with head, neck and trunk straight, begins to realize that what he thinks is the real world is an illusion. Contemplating impermanence, the recognition dawns that attachment to the objects of the external world is the greatest obstacle to realization, even at the subtlest level, and begins the journey from impermanence back to the permanent source, by contemplating that which is permanent and how it shines through all that is impermanent.



**Triple Junction Bowl 2004. Stoneware 16in.**

**V.3**
**To the ignorant and uninstructed, You are the City of Light, banisher of inner darkness, placed in mid-ocean,**
**To the slothful, You are the mind-expanding flow of sweetness from celestial blossoms,**
**To the spiritually impoverished, You are a mandala of philosopher's stones,**
**And for those sufferers submerged in the ocean of repeated birth and death, You become the supporting tusk of Vishnu as Boar, who brought the earth out of the sea.**

This is another way of looking at four different kinds of aspirants, couched in the poetry of Saundaryalahari, which requires deep digging to extract the esoteric meaning, although this verse is more transparent than most. Here, each type of seeker is identified by the quality that must be overcome to make spiritual progress. We all possess in some degree all of these obstacles. In each case, "You" is Tripura Sundari, She who lives in the "city of light": the three cities of waking, dreaming, and sleeping. There is also an implied hierarchy of levels of realization, which are related to the chakras.

Ignorance or lack of knowledge must be overcome by pursuing wisdom. When we awake to the vision of light in the center of the mandala, we can pursue it relentlessly. The obstacle is as usual, the samskaras in the "ocean" of the latent unconscious mind, which need to be "crossed". This wisdom comes when we transcend Ajna Chakra.

Inertia and slothfulness is tamas, which keeps us attached to the pleasures of food, drink, entertainment, and the other attractions of Maya. Wonderful fantasies are mistaken for meditation, and obscure spiritual progress. Attachment to the lower chakras is overcome at Anahata (grasping, holding).

Spiritual impoverishment implies the lack of will to be a serious seeker. When we get glimpses of something beyond this state, we may see them as philosopher's stones, which glow with the attraction of hidden knowledge, but we don't have the means to unlock them. Until we make a sankalpa (I can do it, I must do it, I will do it!) and generate the discipline to carry it out, we can't move. Maybe not too farfetched to interpret this as being stuck at Manipura; when we have the fire to move us further, it opens.

Parts of us are really stuck; here portrayed as the sufferers immersed in repeated death and rebirth, who hardly have an awareness of any other possibility, they eventually will be lifted above the ocean of Samsara by the tusk of Vishnu as Varaha, the Boar Avatar. This can be seen as being stuck in Muladhara. The ten avatars of Vishnu portray the story of evolution on earth -- which parallels the inner story of spiritual evolution. The first avatar is a fish (can only live in water), second a turtle (amphibious), third a boar (lives on land but can swim), and so on. Varaha lifted the earth above the ocean, which can be interpreted as awakening Kundalini so she can leave Muladhara and take up her true abode in Svadhistana.

About 12 minutes into Lecture 1 of Saundaryalahari, Swami Rama says: *"So householders should not be lost in the world, forgetting their goal, because goal of the renunciates and monks and goals of householders, common people is one and the same. They are not different. We all need enlightenment. We all need to attain the goal of life. What is that goal of life? You often say God. But when you study scriptures, you finally come to conclusion that doesn't make any sense. You need to attain a state of peace, happiness and bliss. And if you have attained this happiness and bliss, then that is called God. If not, then you are worshipping, adoring a god who is not God."*

Shankara has changed the order of chakra names from the usual:

| | Standard | Shankara | Bhuta |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | | Sahasrara | |
| 8 | | Guru | |
| 7 | Sahasrara | Soma | |
| 6 | Ajna | Ajna | Mind |
| 5 | Vishuddha | Vishuddha | Space |
| 4 | Anahata | Anahata | Air |
| 3 | Manipura | Svadhistana | Fire |
| 2 | Svadhistana | Manipura | Water |
| 1 | Muladhara | Muladhara | Earth |
| | | | |

This places her true abode at the Fire element, which corresponds with the Varaha metaphor, i.e. she is lifted above the water element to fire.

The three schools of Tantra are Kaula, Mishra and Samaya.

**Kaula** (external ritual) uses the three lower chakras: Muladhara, Manipura and Svadhistana
**Mishra** (external/internal ritual) uses Svadhistana, Anahata and Vishuddha
**Samaya** (only internal ritual) uses Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna.

When Kundalini moves to Svadhistana, the Seeker is prepared to move her to the higher chakras. It is difficult to awaken her and get her past the water element. After She is in Fire, the energy is there to take her up the mountain, as Swami Rama points out in his Saundaryalahari video no. 3, around 1:20. *"It's called solar science. So those who are teachers, before they teach, Kaula and then they teach Mishra, they first teach their students something about this solar power through Manipura chakra. Concentrating on this chakra, which is situated at the navel, a triangular form that indicates fire, the flames of the fire go higher upwards. So making their mind one-pointed, they do it. In a few days time, heat starts being felt by you, you start perspiring, and it becomes easy to notice that you have accomplished something."*

The Seeker has to work hard to raise Her to Fire, but then Fire itself fuels the ascent into the higher chakras.

Swami Rama's translation of Verse 3 (thanks to Nandini Avery, from her notes on evening prayers at the Himalayan Institute, Honesdale): "Thou art the sun that dispels the darkness of the ignorant; to the unknowing Thou art a spiritual flower overflowing with honey; to the needy Thou art the gem which bestows one's heart's desires; and to those who are drowned in the ocean of births and deaths, Thou art the Rescuer."



**Water 2000. Stoneware 8ft. Coll. Alexander Cockburn**

**V.4**
**All other Divinities give protection and grant boons with their hands.**
**You alone are unique in not showing any form or gesture**
**That is perceptible in the three worlds,**
**Except for Your lotus feet, which unfailingly give more than asked for.**

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva operate in the conditions of waking, dreaming, and sleeping – the three worlds. Therefore they have attributes, or "hands", and are impermanent. The Goddess, existing beyond the three worlds and pervading them, is not perceptible to the unpracticed, but is everywhere. When we become conscious of She Who Lives in the Three Cities (Tripura Sundari), we receive knowledge beyond what is imaginable by the mind.

What are these lotus feet? The lotus is a major symbol with many levels of meaning: each chakra is a lotus. The lotus has its roots in the mud, rises through water, and blooms in air, extending its fragrance into space. The cave of the heart is said to contain a lotus in which realization resides. Ajna chakra is symbolized as a small circle with two "wings" – the last vestige of duality. The crowning lotus is Sahasrara, the thousand-petalled lotus, where her feet are fully realized as not two. "Lotus Feet" is sometimes translated as "Thy station". This verse points out that when she is awakened as Kundalini in Muladhara chakra, associated with earth, more than could ever be imagined by the mind alone becomes available.

*Anne Glazier, who is a Sanskrit teacher, comments: I mentioned earlier that the poem is written in the form of 'kavya' Court Poetry. Such poetry uses 'bhavas', sentiments, such as heroism, anger, fear, etc. (look up in SR's books). A favourite bhava is love which has two divisions: love in separation and love in union. Love poetry has long had the double meaning 1. the obvious, a love poem to a person 2. sometimes less obvious, the expression of the individual soul expressing union with, or longing for, union with the beloved, Brahman. It seems to me that Saundarya Lahari expresses love in union, hence the bliss. The words and phrases are the conventional ones used in love poetry,'face like the full moon', 'slender waisted', 'heavy breasted', with 'feet like lotus blossoms' and so on. The poem can be read as a love poem on the physical level; on a subtler level the 'bhava' will emerge. Perception at this level means understanding the allusions and experiencing the emotional level, as the poet intended, in the moment now. If it has to be explained, the hearer has missed that precious moment - explanation cannot give the experience. Understanding the poem on the cosmic level is the highest experience. The Science of Poetry is extremely refined and advanced; it is the basis of understanding Indian literature, music and art.*

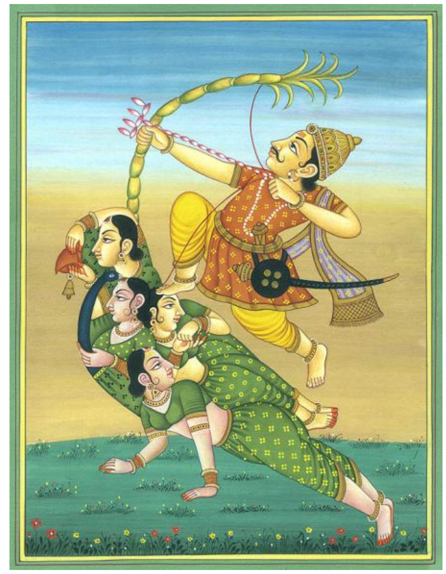
Swami Rama says, about 54 minutes into Lecture 1: ***"So this vidya—there's a book called Saundarya Lahari—a wave of beauty, a wave of bliss, a wave of wisdom. So this mother worship is not the worship of a female deity; it is not. It is not accepting any dichotomy or trichotomy. It's a systematic leading to the Source of highest consciousness within you, where you find unification with Brahman, the Absolute One."***

The Seeker begins his journey in the body. With progress, the work moves to the subtle world that supports the external body, the chakras and nadis, beginning by awakening the "root" of the lotuses, the Muladhara chakra. In the beginning, breathing practices are helpful in stimulating the root area: Agni Sara, Kapalabati, Bhastrika and Upward Traveling. Breathing practices are done with the body. As awareness expands, these practices are done not with the body, but with the mind as pranayama. The key word in doing these practices is Ahimsa, not efforting.



**Smoked Salmon 2000. Stoneware 6ft. Coll. Alexander Cockburn**

**V.5**
**Vishnu envied You so much that He**
**Became a female (Mohini) and even succeeded in seducing Shiva.**
**Kama, after worshipping You,**
**Brings confusion into the minds of sages.**



*Kama & Parrot Vehicle*

Here we learn that even Shiva, the great ascetic, succumbs to the power of Shakti and desire arises. But desires operate on many levels, and even lifelong sages confuse lower and higher desires.

Swami Rama says in Lecture 1, 1hr 5min: *"So that which is the controller of time, space and causation, all these activities of the universe, I'm talking of that Mother Divine who dwells in you. It's very difficult – very, very difficult for a teacher to make the student aware that God dwells in you, is not away from you. Don't say 'God come down'. Say 'God come out'. Our prayer changes completely -- changes when you say God is in me, the ultimate truth is in me, the absolute reality is in me. Which part of me? Mortal, semi-immortal or totally immortal part? This Vidya will lead you gently, lovingly to that."*

In the story of the churning of the ocean of milk, the Gods and Asuras were competing to get the nectar arising from discrimination. When the nectar finally arose, both sides rushed to collect it. To assure the Gods' success, Vishnu took the form of the enchantress Mohini, who distracted the Asuras long enough so the Gods could capture it. Later, she seduced even supreme Shiva, who then had to recognize that Shakti indeed had power over him. Kama (usually and unsatisfactorily translated as Eros, which does not have the deeper levels of meaning present in the Sanskrit), the "Divinity-of-Lust", seduces even the sages into confusing lust for sex with lust for divine union. In Vedanta, there is a distinction between "the process by which the ruler of the universe deposits his seed in the womb of Nature which is the real Eros and the mere drop of lust which spreads through the universe as the worldly Eros, the perturber of the mind." (Danielou)

Kama, frequently translated *Eros (his Greek counterpart)*, means desire and is one of the universal principles, the supreme divinity, the impeller of creation. He is born of a watery principle (moon) and a fiery principle (Prana). In the bija mantra *klim,* K = water, L = earth, I = lust, M = moon – this mantra represents transcendent lust in rituals. (condensed from Danielou). This is not lust of the body, but lust for divine union. Kama also is the basis of all other desires.

The Seeker, having at least partially awakened Kundalini and raised her to the water element – the chakra associated with creative lust (as well as sexual lust) – has to work hard to keep from being pulled into the seductions of external attraction. The work is to recognize Kama for what it is – the primary attraction of Shiva and Shakti at a very deep level – and not to be fooled by its manifestations – lower desires colored by Samskaras.

*Rig-Veda X.129.1-7*

*Existence or nonexistence was not then. The bright region was not, nor the space (vyoman) that is beyond. What encompassed? Where? Under whose protection? What water was there – deep, unfathomable?*

*Death or immortality was not then. There was no distinction between night and day. That One breathed, windless, by itself. Other than that there was nothing beyond.*

*In the beginning there was darkness concealed by darkness. All this was water without distinction. The One that was covered by voidness emerged through the might of the heat-of-austerity.*

*In the beginning, desire [kama], the first seed of mind, arose in That. Poet-seers, searching in their heart with wisdom, found the bond of existence in nonexistence.*

*Their [visions'] ray stretched across [existence and nonexistence]. Perhaps there was a below; perhaps there was an above. There were givers of seed; there were powers: effort below, self-giving above.*

*Who knows the truth? Who here will pronounce it whence this birth, whence this creation? The gods appeared afterward, with the creation of this [world]. Who then knows whence it arose?*

*Whence this creation arose, whether it created itself or whether it did not? He who looks upon it from the highest space, he surely knows. Or maybe He knows not.*



**Damaru (Spinner) 2000. Porcelain 24in. D. Coll. Alexander Cockburn**

**V.6**
**Oh Daughter of the Snowy Peak, Kama leaps into action at Your slightest glance;**
**With flowery bow and bumblebee bowstring, five-flowered arrow and Springtime leading the way –**
**He mounts the chariot of the southwest breeze**
**And rules creation -- that god of love.**

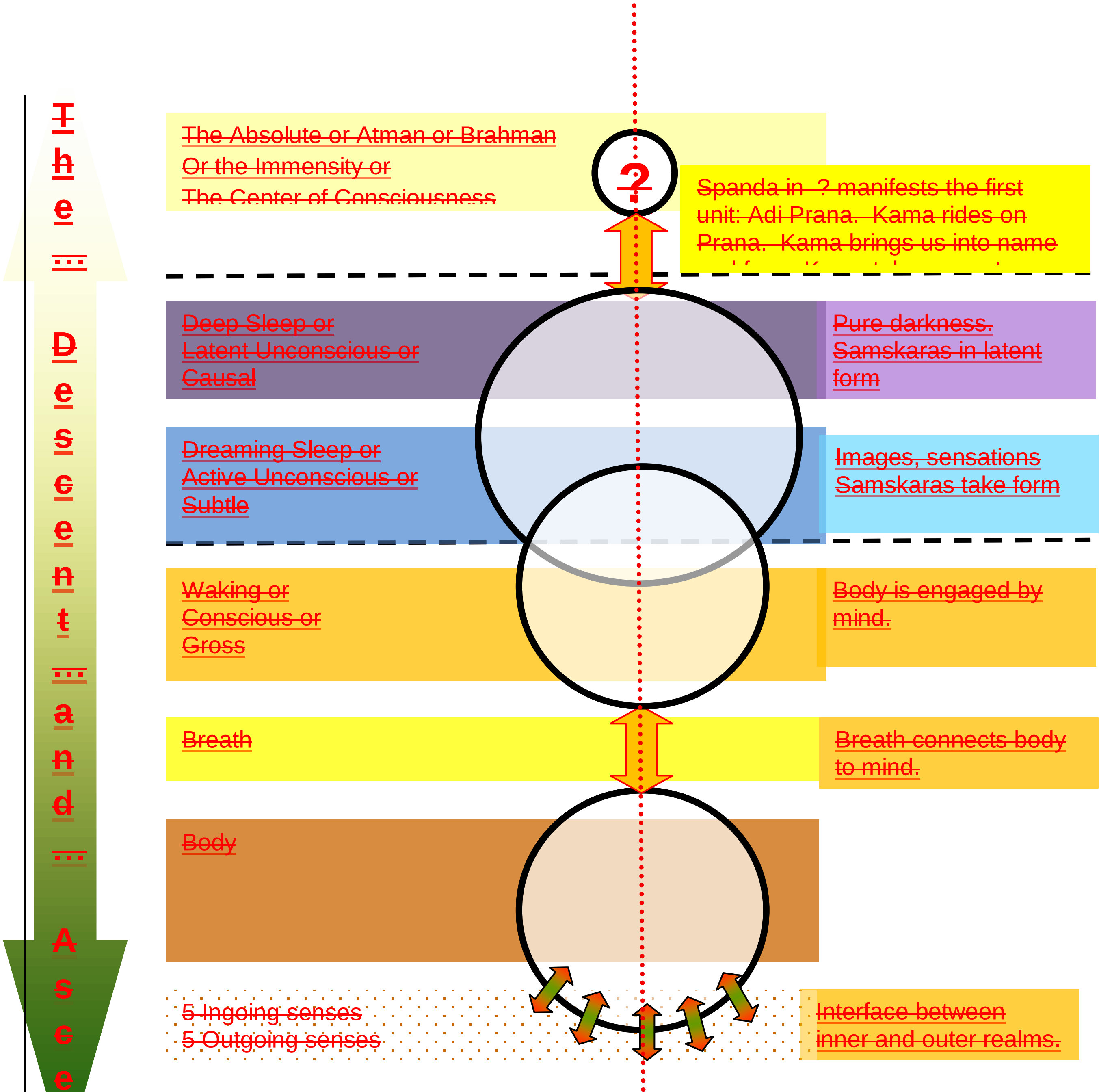
The slightest recognition of Mother Divine, or Kundalini, energizes the Seeker. The metaphor of bees and flowers is used frequently in *Saundaryalahari*. In springtime, flowers and bees are inevitably attracted, so the bow and bowstring give great impulse to the five-flowered arrow of the senses (five senses). The southwest breeze is, of course, Prana. Southwest is the direction of the tenth Mahavidya*, Kamala, who represents a “state of reconstituted unity” (Khanna, *Yantra*). Kama manifests through Shakti as Kamala.

More simply, all this world of name and form arises from the bindu. Words really can’t express it because the mind can’t grasp it. But the first unit of manifestation is called Adi Prana – undivided essential energy. Primary undifferentiated desire rides on Prana. Kama is “the first seed of mind.” It is that desire that forms our body/minds, and that desire which takes us back to where we came from after we participate in this wonderful dance of the world.

*The Ten Mahavidyas are the Ten Objects of Transcendent Knowledge, the ten aspects of time, the powers of ultimate destruction which we must face to become free of bondage to time, space and causation. They also represent five main powers of Shiva, united with five main powers of Shakti. Danielou goes into great length on the topic in *Hindu Polytheism*.

The Seeker learns breathing exercises at the gross level. Those lead to learning pranayama exercises at the level of mind. Mastery leads to regulation of prana. Regulation of prana leads to stillness and silence.

Swami Rama says in Lecture 2, about 1 hour: *“Then comes pranayama exercise. I have not taught any pranayama up to this time. “Pra” means first, “na” means unit—first unit of energy which is already within you. How it is charged through breathing, that is pranayama. “Yama” means control; “prana” means the vehicles that supply energy. How to control them so that they are regulated. Breathing exercises are different. They are superficial, they are important, but they are superficial. They are not called pranayama. They prepare you to do pranayama. Pranayama are the deeper exercises. They can be done mentally. Through pranayama you can apply sushumna; through breathing you cannot. That’s the difference.”*




**A metaphor for creation. We come from undifferentiated consciousness into the world of name and form, devolving from subtlemost to subtle to gross so we can interact in the world. We go out by reversing the process. Meditation is the practice to learn this.** (The diagram is a variation on the model presented by Swami Rama in his Saundaryalahari lecture series. Other variations are at www.swamij.com.)

**V.7**
**Jingling bells resonating around her midriff,**
**Bowed by the weight of breasts like the rounded forehead of a young elephant,**
**Slim of waist, face like the full moon of autumn,**
**Hands holding high the bow, arrows, noose and goad,**
**She seats herself before us, majestic partner of the Burner of Cities.**

What an entrance! The Seeker has a vision of Divine Mother, with her many symbolic attributes. She dwells beyond name and form and time, yet at the same time has name and form when she is worshipped in the mind.

“Advaitic verity is neither real nor abstract, but is something that places itself at the core of consciousness [through contemplation --JD], sometimes real, sometimes amorphous or abstract. …thousands of years of Sanskrit and Tamil poetic conventions have been telescoped into these four lines.” (Nataraj Guru, *Saundaryalahari*)

Waist, breasts and face. All of this verse is above the waist, implying that the lower chakras have been opened, and the Seeker now experiences the chakras from Anahata (heart) upwards.

Here are some more levels of the metaphors:

- Sanskrit “Jhankaara” = the sudden jingling of bells = Shakti awakening through sound. Why are the bells placed at the waist? Shankara calls the third chakra “Swadisthana” – own abode. When Shakti awakens here, She begins the upward journey.
- Elephants are the objects of the senses, and their frontal forehead bulges actually swell in rut = emphasizes the sexual power of Shakti.
- Slim waist = the constriction of movement, the illusion of separation higher/lower, the granthi (knot) of Manipura chakra, fire, which when opened allows Kundalini to rise to Anahata Chakra.
- Face like the full moon = fully reflecting the sunlight of Shiva.

Bow = mind,
Arrows = 5 senses
Noose = attachment (moon)
Goad = repulsion (sun)

The objects of the senses, attachment and repulsion prevent spiritual progress. The noose and goad harness and control the energy which is strong as an elephant (working elephants in India are controlled by these). There are more similes of breasts and frontal bulges in the following verses.

Fully motivated now, the Seeker realizes that the three cities of waking, dreaming, sleeping; conscious, unconscious and subconscious minds need to be “burned” – transcended in order to realize that they are all within Her. The senses – indriyas -- must be controlled before the higher chakras are available.

*Rob McAlister commented: At the risk of being dangerously superficial, it is striking that V.7 portrays the Divine Mother as really attractive, really feminine. As mentioned, the description truly engages the senses!*

*Please explain more about the statement regarding this verse working from the heart chakra upwards. To me, there are a few lower trunk references in the first three lines. For example, first line = sound from midriff (possibly 5th chakra for sound, but midriff = 2nd chakra (?)); third line emphasizes the waist (3rd chakra) is LIKE the moon (5th chakra again). Seems that there is an interplay going on between higher and lower chakras.*

*Burner of cities = masculine counterpart.*
*I replied: Your words ring dangerously true. She is everything everyone wants a Mom to be and more -- very sensual. Remembering that Shankara called Manipura (no. 3) chakra "Swadisthana" -- Own Abode -- (usually no. 2 is named that) and that its tattva is Fire: my experience is that she has to get through Water to Fire, and the energy of Fire is what almost automatically ((once we eliminate the granti (knot) there)) takes her to Anahata (no.4). That is where Shiva descends and they begin their dance leading to Sahasrara. (Remembering that they were never apart…)*

*When Shiva burns the cities (tripura), Mother cools and soothes.*

Swami Rama makes it clear that you can't get there by following a visualization of Divine Mother. At around 55 minutes into Lecture 1, he says: "*So this mother worship is not worship of female deity, it is not accepting only dichotomy or trichotomy, it is systematically leading to the source of highest consciousness within you where you find unification with Brahman, the absolute one."*


**Birth of Zoroaster 2004. Stoneware 8ft. Coll. Dick & Ester Cogswell.**

**V.8**
**Seated on a Shiva-form couch with a Shiva cushion,**
**In a mansion made of thought gems surrounded by wish-fulfilling Kalpadruma trees,**
**Circled by a celestial grove, on an island of gems in an ocean of nectar,**
**The far-seeing immerse themselves in Your upsurging tide of joy and realization.**



The vision is now fully formed, with Shiva and Shakti united in a classic pose. In this verse, she is seated on Shiva, placing her as the first cause (Shiva can do nothing without Shakti). In other verses, they are portrayed as equals.

- Shiva-form couch = Shiva in a reclining pose. The couch is supported by lesser deities. The cushion is Shiva himself.
- Seated = Shakti is posed vertically above Shiva; abstractly, the vertical represents the spiritual dimension, and the horizontal the worldly dimension; so this is an image of transcendence.
- Mansion of Thought Gems = fruits of contemplation, the realizations of the Mahavakyas.
- Kalpadruma trees represent the power of Sankalpa, which when applied to the mind's mansion of thoughts, is bound to produce fruits.
- Trees & grove = the trees as individual thoughts; purified and seen as one continuous thought (meditation), they become the grove, perhaps a reference to Sahasrara.
- Island in ocean of nectar = the result of churning (meditation/contemplation) i.e. purification, this image relates to the story of the churning of the ocean of milk: separation of nectar by the discriminatory power. (see V.5) It may also refer to Sahasrara.
- Upsurging = of course, Kundalini rising.

The Seeker, now fully occupied and inspired by this inner vision, is ready to go further, as we shall see in the next verse. The Seeker also remembers that it is the direct experience of immersion that leads further. The verses inspire the experience: that is the value of poetry and imagery.

Swami Rama translated the verse as: "Blessed are the few that worship Thee, the flood of consciousness and bliss, having as Thy abode the lap of the Supremely Auspicious One, in the mansion built from the gems which yield all desires, situated in a garden on the island of gems, surrounded by divine trees in an ocean of ambrosia." Thanks to Nandini Avery for contributing this from her notes on Swami Rama's evening prayers at the Himalayan Institute, Honesdale, PA.

Swami Rama says in Lecture 1, about 1hr 5min: "*So that which is the controller of time is space and causation. All these activities of the universe. I'm talking of that Mother Divine who dwells within you. It's very difficult—very, very difficult—to make the student aware that God resides in you, is not away from you. Don't say, "Oh God, come down." Don't! Or say, "God, come out." "God, be with me," means let me be aware of the presence of Lord. That's what that means.*

*Our prayer changes, completely changes, when you say, "God is in me; the ultimate Truth is in me; the Absolute Reality is in me."*



**V.9**
**Earth in Muladhara, Water in Manipura,**
**Fire in Swadisthana, Air in Hridaya (Anahata), with Space above (Vishuddha),**
**Mind between eyebrows, and breaking through the entire *kula* path,**
**You play secretly with Your Lord in the thousand-petalled lotus.**

In Kundalini Yoga, Kundalini progressively rises from the lowest chakra to the highest. The chakras represent the subtle form of the five elements, ascending from the solidity of earth to the most subtle.

Shankara has deliberately changed the usual order of the chakras. The normal progression of chakras from bottom to top is 1=Muladhara, 2 = Swadisthana, 3 = Manipura, 4 = Anahata, 5 = Swadisthana, 6 = Ajna, 7 = Sahasrara. Shankara reverses 2 and 3, so the progression is 1, 3, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7. The bhutas/elements remain in the same progression: earth, water, fire,air,space,mind.

Some scholars think this was a mistake, others explain it in various ways. If nothing else, it is an interesting poetic device. I found a couple of possible reasons for this reversal: One Nepali friend told me: It is sometimes said that in women, Manipura is in the second position and Swadisthana in the third. Because "mani" means precious gems and "pura" means full of (it also means "city", as in "Tripura"), it makes sense that in women the second chakra is related to the womb. By placing "her own abode" in Manipura, Shankara seems to relate Her more to fire than to water. Fire relates to solar science.

The other reason came from relating the verses to Swami Rama's video lecture, when he talks of bringing Kundalini to Manipura, about 1hr 55min. into Lecture 3, on intuitive diagnosis*: "I always involve Manipura chakra throughout, and tell the students to spend few minutes sadhana on Manipura chakra. But there is another chakra between Ajna and Sahasrara, that is called guru chakra, jnana chakra. Now you'll find this point [indicating Muladhara] flows downwards and that flows upwards [indicating from anahata up]. Shakti's trend in the human body is downwards, because Kundalini remains coiled in a dormant form, and slipped from her own abode [points to Manipura or perhaps Swadisthana on the blackboard] because she's drunk."*

About 13 minutes into Lecture 3: *"So much time and we forget that there is someone eternal seated within us who is our real friend. We forget that. A constantly present friend within you, I'm going to make you aware of that presence, that friend within you. You need really closeness and that's the third path called Samaya; I am with you". When you have this awareness that the lord is with me, the lord of life is with me, then there will be no fear. Fear of what? It has only two reasons: of losing what you have, and of not gaining what you want. And you all are afraid of your bodies because mind nobody can take. It's such a dirty thing nobody wants [it]. [laughter]. If you offer your mind to somebody….you can't do it because mind does not belong to you. You have no control you belong to your mind and you are giving your owner instead of giving your slave. The day you are the owner of your mind, master of your mind, then you give. That is called self-surrender. Otherwise it is just unauthorized giving."*

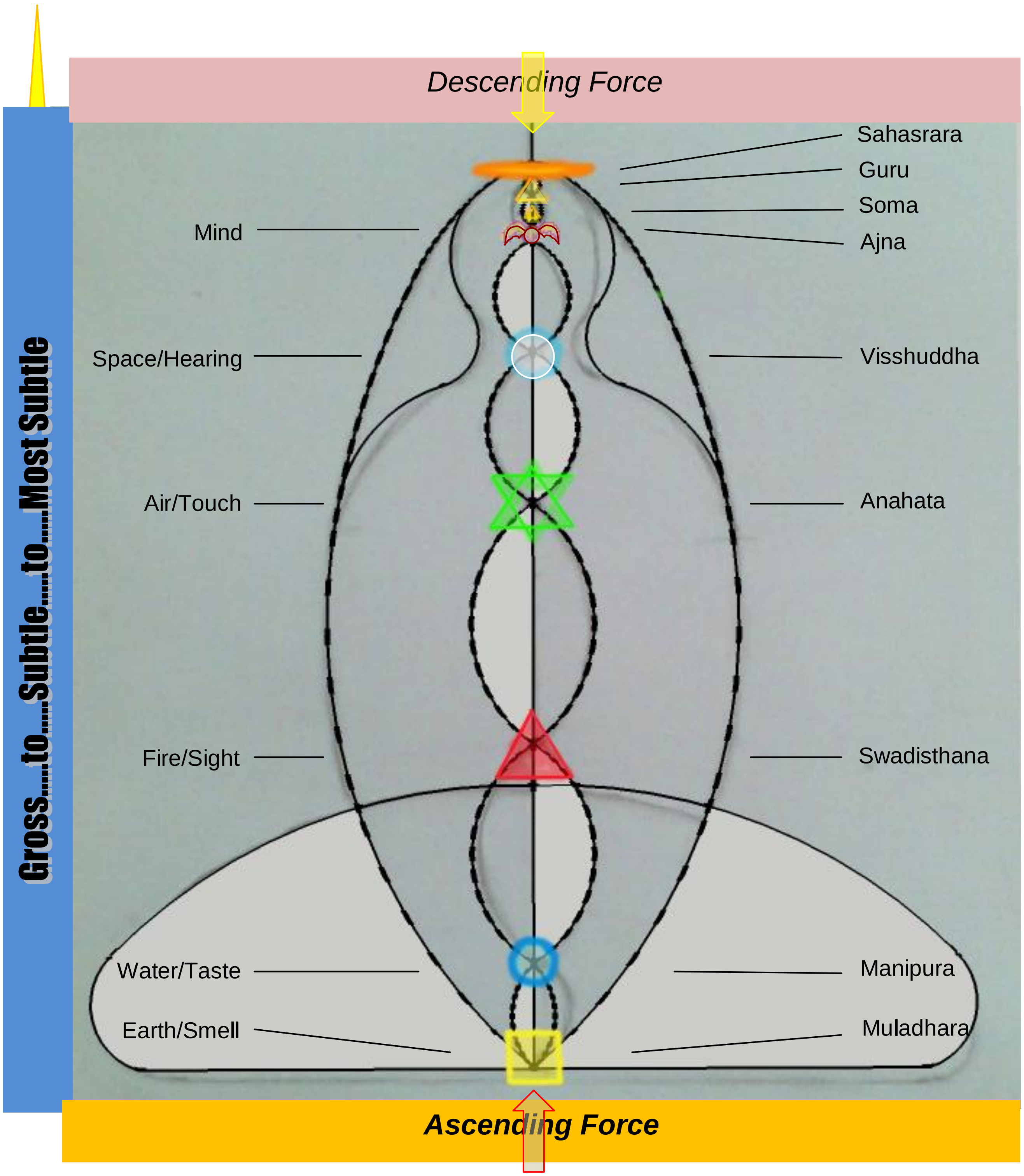
Kundalini Shakti, having descended to accomplish her work of creating the body, rests in Muladhara, intoxicated by her efforts, and remains asleep until she is aroused. Swadisthana means "own abode" or "proper place". Conventionally, Her Own Abode is associated with the water element in the second chakra. The Seeker's initial work is to wake her up and raise her to the third chakra, whatever name we put on it -- where the fire element provides the energy to

take her higher to Anahata, where she “begins her dance” with Shiva, i.e. her ascent is no longer blocked by grosser energies. Swami Rama emphasized the importance of Agni Sara practice to help with this.

The rest of the chakras are in the usual order. The *kula* path is the process of Kundalini rising, in this verse as a sudden breakthrough, although it often is gradual. In the next verse, the descent from Sahasrara back to Muladhara is described.

Shiva and Shakti are one and the perception of separateness is false. All attachments are hooked to false identities. The Seeker works hard for this realization, but the realization is not the result of hard work. It is the result of surrendering all actions.

The silhouette human body seated in meditation can be perceived as linga/yoni: the vertical integrated in the horizontal. The manifested human mind/body arises in the causal level as vibrations and radiation – sound and light: the level of mantra. One way to visualize Sushumna – the central channel – is as a vibrating string. Ida and Pingala represent the extent of its vibrations. Amplitude decreases as frequency increases, from bottom to top. The nodes are still points in the string, defined by frequency changes. It is deceptive to look at a two-dimensional diagram, since the structure is multi-dimensional. Direct experience of chakras is available through Yoga. It’s important to remember that all these models constructed by the mind cannot possibly express what is beyond the mind. They are useful to guide the mind in the direction of silence.


Gross....to....Subtle....to....Most Subtle
Descending Force
Sahasrara
Guru
Soma
Ajna
Mind
Space/Hearing
Visshuddha
Air/Touch
Anahata
Fire/Sight
Swadisthana
Water/Taste
Manipura
Earth/Smell
Muladhara
Ascending Force

**V.10**
**Nectar streams from between Your two feet,**
**As you pour lunar realm blessings over the 72,000 Nadis.**
**You re-create the six chakras,**
**Go back to Muladhara and re-enter the serpent form.**
**Three and a half coils sleeping in the *Kulakund.***

Kundalini, having attained Sahasrara in the previous verse, again returns down the six chakras to resume sleep in Muladhara. Three and a half usually refers to the three syllables of A, U, M, plus the silence after – counted as half a coil. It is the silence, the fourth state, which contains the other three states.

From Video 3: approximately 52:00: *"….Because you need to condense the inner heat, use the flow of energy which is all over the body -- scattered. By going to powerhouse first, and that powerhouse looks like this. [draws three-and-a-half spirals]. It's based at the root of your spinal column. 53:09. In the powerhouse that energy which is called Kundalini is like this [shows spirals]. Coiled. Now the yoga science says there is a flow of nectar from this part of the body [upper head]. She drinks that flow of nectar and remains intoxicated. It's not the wine you find in the market, or liquor, its intoxication is heavier than that. Even japa intoxication is very heavy…."*

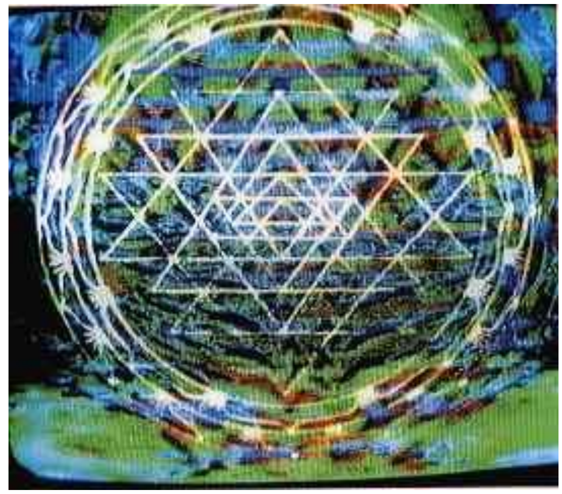
72,000 is the traditional number of nadis (subtle pranic energy channels) in the body. Swami *Rama says in* Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama*: "The fetus is connected to the mother at the navel, and it is from the navel that seventy-two thousand energy channels, or nadis in Sanskrit, fan out into the personality system. Since the energy pattern is arranged in a symmetrical manner, the body grows in a beautifully symmetrical way. For instance, look at even the hairlines of the body, and you can see how they are patterned along the symmetrical paths of the energy flow."*

Her two feet, as we've seen before, are at the bindu (Ajna chakra) where Shiva and Shakti enter duality: the Moon and the Sun, or Ida and Pingala nadis – left and right channels. The Seeker, having awakened briefly to absolute reality (in the last verse) but still having a body, returns to the world of name and form knowing Her presence in all states of consciousness. The Seeker makes a Sankalpa to not forget. There is still action to be done in the world of name and form, surrendering to Her guidance.



**Serpent Hole 2006. Stoneware 6ft. Coll. Dick and Ester Cogswell**

**V.11**
**With four wheels of our Lord Shiva,**
**And with five different wheels of You, my mother,**
**Those nine are the real basis of this world,**
**Your house of the holy wheel,**
**Your angular refuge of eight and sixteen petals,**
**Three different circles and three different lines,**
**Making a total of forty four angles.**



**Yantra, Mantra, Tantra** (from Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati)

- *Mantra has to do with sound vibration, at both its gross and subtle levels.*
- *Yantra has to do with light vibration and its form, both at gross and subtle levels.*
- *Tantra has to do with the methods of dealing with, and going beyond both light and sound.*

Shankara describes the Shri Yantra. For those interested in the details, there are books such as "Yantra", by Madhu Khanna. For those interested in practice as taught by Swami Rama, the yantra is not necessary:
"Wheels" refers to chakras.
Four upward Shiva triangles…
Five downward Shakti triangles…
Nine = nine chakras. In addition to the usual seven, above Ajna is Soma Chakra, and above that Guru or Jnana Chakra…
Forty four angles = forty three plus bindu…
The triangles are supported on a vertical axis – Sushumna Nadi – the point multiplies to become a line…
The horizontal axes represent different vibrational energies, the chakras.
The concentric rings that contain the smaller sets of triangles represent the nine levels of devolution/evolution from Atman to Muladhara and back:

There are nine circuits used with the yantra for meditation, going from the outer perimeter in to the Bindu, and back out again.

The Shri Yantra (light) corresponds to Om mantra (sound). Interestingly, when Om is chanted into a device called the Vodaphone, which translates sound into visual patterns on a screen, the Shri Yantra appears. (from film by Ronald Nameth).

Swami Rama says, in Lecture 1 about 1hr 09min: *"Now, there's a subtle thing here you have to understand. (claps hands) This sound. This sound is not heard outside. Scientifically, a sketch can be made of this sound. "Ahhh." This sound makes a form. All the forms that we see in universe are virtually sounds. Sounds have created the universe—many, many sounds. In this way, in this vast ocean, there are waves—the waves of beauty, the waves of bliss, the waves of wisdom. And all the forms have been created by sounds. All the forms have come out of sound, as all the matter has come out of energy."*

How is this useful to the Seeker? There are traditional practices that use the Shri Yantra as an object for contemplation, leading to meditation, along with a mantra. These practices are taught by qualified teachers to advanced students. Swami Rama, in his Shri Vidya video series, presents the core of the practice – what he calls "the shortest cut" -- without the Shri Yantra, available to anyone who is ready to receive it. Readiness usually requires preparatory practices over time. As with all his video lectures, they require repeated viewing over time, revealing more and more as the Seeker's sadhana progresses.



**V.12**
**Oh Daughter of the Snowy Peak, the best of poets flounder**
**Trying to describe Your beauty, at most conjuring up Brahma and other gods.**
**Eager to see Your face, Apsaras in heaven imagine being one with Shiva**
**Then look out through his eyes at You.**

Shiva alone has the ability to look directly at Shakti. The rest of us have to invent gods such as Brahma, Vishnu and the rest: mere shadows of the indescribable.

Apsaras are something like heavenly damsels, who live near the god realm. They could be called the female aspect of the mind, which can be seen as surrender, the only way to get past the intellect. This may also refer to the nadis, which are often represented as devis or dakinis or gopis (see more after V.14).

The Seeker tries to imagine what it is like to be an Apsara, looking through Shiva's eyes. But can't surrender enough yet to drop imagination.

Swami Rama says in Lecture 3, 47min.: *"Now I was talking to you about the pranic force. About the mother divine in you. Who has created this structure, who has given you beauty, who has given you all that you have. That mother is there in you, that's direct Shakti. Sun without its light is not sun. As sun is different from the light, but sun cannot exist without light, therefore the atman cannot live without atma Shakti. If there's no atma Shakti, there's no atman."*

24 min into Lecture 4*: "Is Divine Mother related to the Lord Within? They are one and the same. There are two aspects of the lord: One is silent aspect or mental aspect, another is expressive aspect. That creative aspect is called Mother, that silent aspect is called Father… of the Universe. One is called Shiva, another is called Shakti. Without Shakti, nothing can be created. This universe was directly created by Shakti. You see… ..source is Shiva, but Shiva without Shakti's help cannot create the universe. One is unmanifested power, another is manifestation. That which manifests is called Shakti, that which remains in unmanifested form though it is still there is called self-existent power – that is Shiva – and which manifests itself that's called Shakti. Fine discrimination is there."*



**Upper Franklin 1973.  Stoneware 5ft.**

**V.13**
**A worn out old man, unlovely to look at, sluggish in love's art --**
**If he just gets a side glance from You, hundreds of young women run after him,**
**With hair ribbons flying loose and garments slipping from their jar-like breasts,**
**The locks of their golden girdles violently bursting and their garments in disarray.**

Shankara becomes more than passionate in this verse, letting kama run wild to point out how strong the desire is for divine union. If you read Swami Rama's *Love Whispers*, which is a collection of his poems to Mother Divine, you will find the same passion. Just like an old man, the Seeker is inert until even the smallest glimmer of Shakti enters his consciousness. Then all the nadis (often portrayed as young women in Sanskrit poetry) become aligned toward Shiva. Obviously there is no possibility of stopping such a great outburst of energy. There are said to be 72,000 nadis -- subtle energy channels -- in the body. For example, in the stories of Krishna and the Gopis (young female cowherds), he stole their saris while they were bathing in the river, so they had to expose their naked bodies. The metaphor is about cleansing the mind so that prana can flow in a directed way in the nadis, and concentrate in Sushumna (the central nadi in the subtle spine).

Golden girdles could refer to the illusory golden disc of Maya which keeps Shakti in Muladhara, and blocks her higher movement.

In Video 3, about 60 minutes, Swami Rama is discussing Agni Sara, and describes how that practice can increase both hunger and sexual appetite. On the subtle level, Agni Sara increases the fire in Manipura chakra, providing fuel to take Kundalini higher in the subtle body when gross desire is transmuted into desire for divine union.

45 min into Lecture 4: *"The renunciates give diksha to their students on this path, and one of the finest paths of diksha is upward traveling. [draws five short lines at bottom, the fifth extends upward as a sinuous line, topped with an arrow] When the student is ready, when he is eager to know this, then upward traveling. Who travels upwards? Shakti. Then there is no way of traveling downwards. If Shakti travels downward, then it is under your conscious control, never unconscious."*

50min: *"There is a method of initiation which is called upward traveling. In upward traveling, vigorous pranayama exercise, not breathing—pranayama exercise – is taught with certain bandhas, and then the food that is secreted by the ovaries and testes starts going upwards."*

"*So when the teacher sees all these hurdles and barriers, he initiates on the path of .. when the student says… when he's crossed his sixty-five, seventy [years] and says 'I have seen, now I would like… please give me… I find this difficulty', then this initiation is given. Upward traveling. For the tendency of the mind is downward. And it's something literal, biological. It is done. It is taught."*

Swami Rama says in Saundaryalahari lecture 3: *"All the breathing exercises, all the pranayama exercises, are meant to have perfect control over the pause…[Breathing exercises] are superficial, they are important, but they are superficial. They are not called pranayama. They prepare you to do pranayama. Pranayama are the deeper exercises. They can be done mentally. Through pranayama you can apply sushumna; through breathing you cannot. That's the difference."*

Upward traveling must be learned from an experienced teacher, after mastering the preliminaries of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Hatha Yoga, breathing exercises and Agni Sara.

A qualified teacher (one who teaches from direct experience) is necessary for individual guidance. For example, Agni Sara is taught in many different styles, not all of which assist upward traveling. In the beginning, the Seeker is concerned with the body and efforting. Practice leads to surrender and non-violence. Surrender reveals the highest truth. The movement is from gross to subtle: body, breath, mind, beyond mind.

Vasistha reminds us that "These yogic methods bring about the desired results if they are practiced without violence or force. When one is firmly established in such practice with simultaneous growth in dispassion and when the mental conditioning comes under perfect restraint, there is fruition of the restraint of the movement of prana."

He also says (p.331): "It is not possible to 'kill the mind' without proper methods. Knowledge of the self, company of holy men, the abandonment of conditioning and the restraint of prana – these are the means to overcome the mind. Ignoring these and resorting to violent practices like hatha yoga, austerities, pilgrimage, rites and rituals are a waste of time. Self-knowledge alone bestows delight on you." -- *The Supreme Yoga, a translation of Yoga Vasistha by Swami Venkatesananda.*

Hatha Yoga is violent? Violence requires the built-in opposition of duality. Violence cannot exist in non-dualism. In that sense, any action, any movement of body or prana, even movement of the mind, is a kind of violence.

The Seeker, feeling his nadis start to tingle and again getting a glimpse of Her, sits with head, neck and trunk erect, straightened by the force of Prana. There is a strong current, but no violence of effort. No pauses, no jerks in body, breath, mind and prana.



Baroque Passage 2005.  Stoneware 8 ft.

**V.14**
**In earth (Muladhara) fifty six, fifty two in water (Manipura),**
**in fire (Swadisthana) sixty two, fifty four in air (Anahata),**
**in ether (Vishuddha) seventy two, and in mind (Ajna) sixty four**
**These (360) are the rays;**
**— above them (in the Sahasrara) is the pair of Your lotus feet.**

Up through the chakras. There is a lot of numerology in here, which has to do with the attributes of Divine Mother and their distribution. There are 360 degrees in a circle, more or less 360 days in a year. A pair of feet, roots of the bindu or origination, above all the other chakras, showing that Tripura Sundari is ruler of microcosm and macrocosm. This is the center of the Shri Yantra – the bindu. According to Swami Tapasyananda (commentary published by Shri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, ISBN 81-7120-244-6, p.58), these rays are all the Mother powers which support the cosmos. They are also the nadis that go to the chakras below Sahasrara.

The Seeker recognizes that Lalita is in and beyond all phenomena. Getting involved in the numerology is one possibility, getting beyond it is more useful.

For those of you interested in the details, go to Mike Magee, Subhagodya (http://www.shivashakti.com/subha.htm). Some excerpts:

**“The Number 21600**

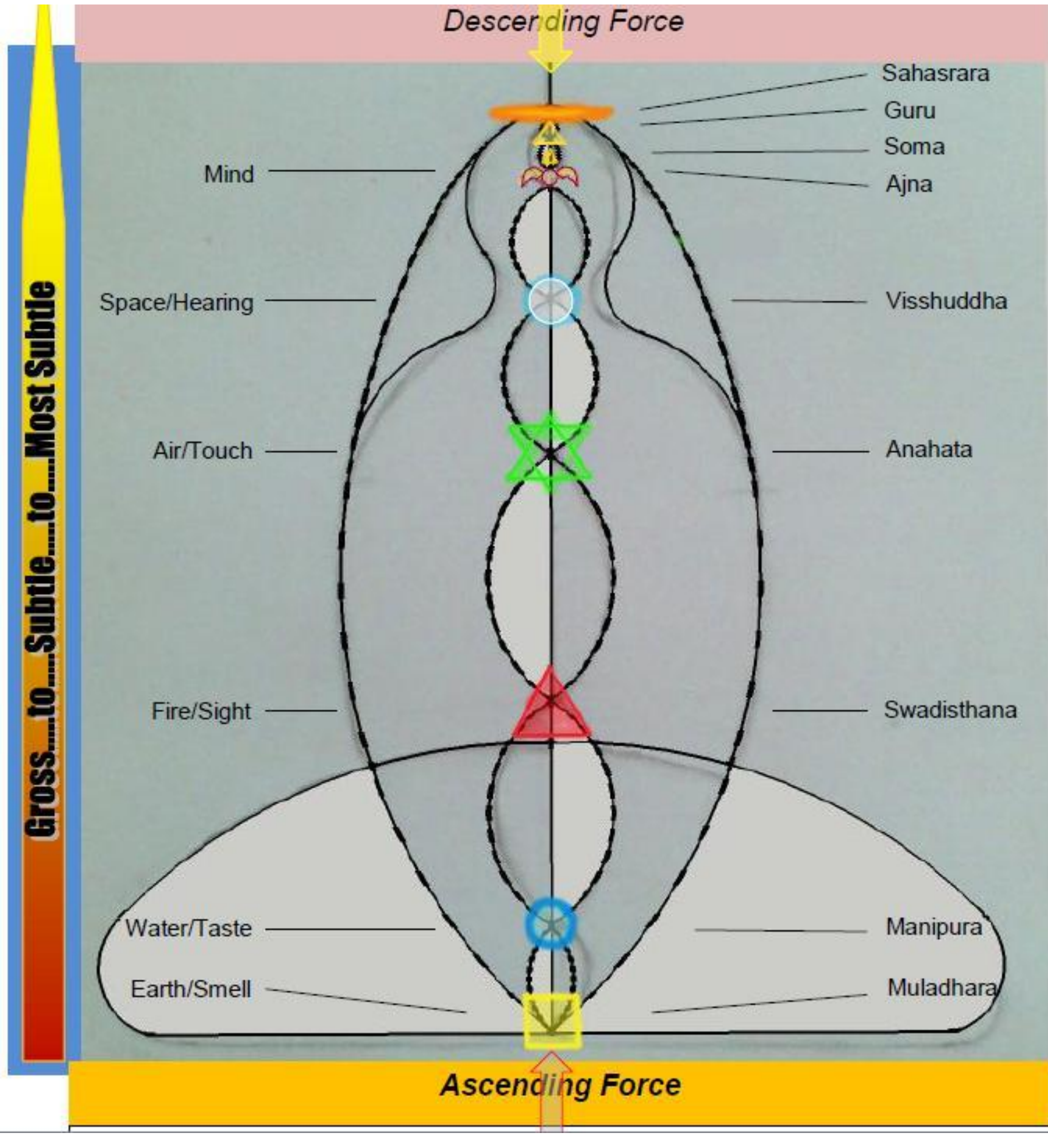
“This number is said to represent the breaths of a human being in a day of 24 hours. There are said to be 10800 by day and the same number by night. These breaths constitute an unpronounced mantra called Ajapamantra, Sa being the Sun and Ha being the Moon. These Sun and Moon breaths represent the inhalation and exhalation of the Creator of the Cosmos, and from these two proceed all Cosmic variations.”

Lunar cycles also are involved: “Lalita *(another name for Tripurasundari –J.D.)* has 15 Nityas or Eternities -- the mantras are declared in this work. Each of these 15 subsidiary or attendant Devis rules over a lunar day. The 16th or Full Moon day is Lalita Herself. *(There are 16 syllables in Her mantra –J.D.)* Each of the Nityas is said to possess 1440 breaths (1440 x 15 = 21600). This number 21600 and its multiples and integers is of great importance in Shri Vidya. For example, the calculation of the places of the planets in Hindu sidereal astrology is obtained by referring to how much each planet has moved in the current Kali Yuga of 432,000 years, it being assumed by the astrologers that all the planets started off at the beginning of the Yuga at 0 degrees Aries. So too there are 108 beads in a Tantrika rosary, 108 dance positions, 108 worlds, 108 lesser divisions in the Zodiac (navamsa), 108 lingas, all mantras are to be recited 108 times, etc., etc.”

“In the Zodiac there are 360 minutes, with 60 seconds in each, making 21600 seconds. Like the human body the Zodiac is based on the division into Sun and Moon. All numbers based on 21600 such as 108, 54, 27, 36, 9 lead to an understanding of the yantra of Lalita.”

About 1hr. into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says about Kundalini: *“So what the yogis do is awaken her. So what they heard during that time was hissing sound. “Hssssst!” Like this. Which was later on compared by the swamis to the hiss of the snake. It’s coiled like a snake, you know. They uncoil this force and lead this force which resides inside your centralis canalis—*

*Brahmanadi, Saraswatinadi—the finest tube, channel, in you, and to the highest abode where her Beloved resides. This is easily accomplished by the yogins, by the devotees of Sri Vidya."*



**V.15**
**Bright as autumn moonlight,**
**Plaited and coiled hair with the crescent moon nestled in it,**
**Your four hands showering bounty, granting freedom from fear,**
**Holding a crystal mala and a book of knowledge,**
**If the good bow down to You even once, how could their thoughts and words not have the sweetness of honey, milk, and grapes?**

Here Shakti is in the guise of Saraswati – Goddess of knowledge itself, consort of Brahma the source of all knowledge. (3 different translations have her hair as matted, flowing, plaited and coiled, each of which colors the language very differently. Matted = Shiva, plaited or coiled could refer to the braid of the three gunas.)

The crescent moon = Shiva, since he wears the crescent moon in his hair.

Throughout the verses, Tripura Sundari is sometimes presented without attributes, and sometimes with, emphasizing how She pervades all three worlds, and yet is beyond them.

At 1hr 40min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: "*We test the students again and again and then impart this knowledge. Don't give, don't give, don't give this knowledge. It will not be used properly. And the center is Ajna chakra here. After you have done this worship, you have organized your emotional body; when emotional body no more disturbs the lake of mind, or life, then we give the next step and that is called Ajna chakra. [Draws] You'll see all geometrical figures. It's easy to keep your mind busy on [square], it's easy to keep your mind within [triangle], it's easy to keep your mind in this figure, but mind refuses to be in a circle. Does not want to be in a circle. Does not want to be disciplined. Human nature is not to be disciplined, Human in human wants to be disciplined, because he has knowledge of the absolute. At least he can have a glimpse. You are a compound of three: animal, human and divine. Animal does not want to be, so there are sattva, rajasa, tamasa. Tamasa does not want to be disciplined. The great symbol of tamasa in Indian mythology is Ravana. He had all the powers, what was the difference between Rama's character and his? He was tamasic, not sattvic. He was equally a devotee of Shiva, like Rama. Animal does not want, animal mind does not want to be in the circle. That's why animal mind is trained here [anahata]. Animal mind means that negative part of mind which runs towards the world, and refuses to go to fathom the finer forces of life within you. Rajasic mind and animal mind, animal mind is actually burnt here, [Manipura], as gold is burnt in the fire. And then ornaments are made. Animal mind is burnt here. Then comes that purified mind, disciplined in anahata, becomes human mind. That human mind is led and then given this circle. This is called Ajna chakra. A means in Sanskrit "No -- means no knowledge."*



The Seeker examines his thoughts in Her light, realizes that all knowledge in the relative world is not truth, and vows to think and speak in the light of the sweetness of true knowledge that is beyond the mind.

**V.16**
**Beauty is only She in the thoughts of the kings of poets,**
**Whose minds adore the sweetness of the lotus pond.**
**When She touches them, as the tender light of dawn,**
**They meditate on Her as crimson itself,**
**And their speech flows with poetry worthy of Brahma's consort Saraswati.**

Superior poets are inspired by nothing less than the lotus pond: Sahasrara Chakra, the pinnacle of spiritual attainments. Goddess Saraswati is no less than knowledge itself.

Crimson is the color assigned to Tripura Sundari, Arunaa in Sanskrit, which is the name of a goddess as well as the color crimson. Swami Rama in his later years wore only crimson or maroon clothing; I like to think that this may have been because of his devotion to Tripurasundari.

Meditation and Yoga Nidra (Yogic sleep, conscious sleep) are complementary practices. Both are applied to lead the seeker to a state beyond the duality of waking, dreaming and sleeping states of consciousness. She graces the Seeker with the light that illuminates all three states.

Near the beginning of Lecture 3: Question from audience: *"I would like to hear you say something about Turiya, Samadhi & Saundaryalahari -- what is the difference? Which one is easier?"* Swami Rama replies: *"If you want something easy then have Coca Cola bottle – open, drink and throw it away. [laughter]. Learn to make human effort and when you have done your human effort then there dawns a grace that is called descending force. When you have accomplished the whole process of ascending force, then there dawns, when that peak you touch, then there dawns descending force. It's not difficult, but it cannot be called easy [laughter]."*

About 19 minutes into Lecture 4, Swami Rama comments: "*Turiya and Samadhi difference: Turiya, Saundaryalahari, Tripurasundari -- that's the abode of mother, that's the relationship. Turiya is the abode of mother from which she watches all three states: sleeping, dreaming, waking. So in the path of enlightenment you attain Turiya, but the devotee says with her grace you can easily attain Turiya because it is her abode. That is why she is called Tripurasundari. 'Pur' means cities. There are three cities, waking, dreaming and sleeping. You are a citizen of three cities and she is a citizen of four cities. The fourth one is Turiya. That is the relationship. [In] Turiya you have gone beyond Samadhi. In Samadhi you attain a state of equilibrium, tranquility. Here you go beyond the state which is called sleepless sleep. You are in deep sleep, yet you are fully awake."*

The Seeker meditates before dawn, and is overwhelmed by Her beauty. Opens eyes, and goes into the world, spouting poetry.



Disc 2004.  Stoneware detail.

**V.17**
**Oh, Mother, he who links the elements of words with their meanings,**
**As the luster of broken moonstones reveals the concealed shine of the whole,**
**Will produce great epics releasing the sweet scent**
**Of the mouth of the goddess of knowledge.**

Here again Ma is honored in her form of Saraswati. Elements and meanings of words refer to Sanskrit notions of sound and meaning, with each word releasing inner richness. All sounds arise and dissolve in Om. The Seeker, contemplating Her, will produce great poetry. Great poetry only occurs when words and actions are directed by clear thoughts. Clear thoughts are available when the mind has been disciplined and understands its own nature.

About 24 minutes into Lecture 4, Swami Rama replies to a question: *"Is Divine Mother related to the Lord Within? They are one and the same. There are two aspects of the lord: one is silent aspect or mental aspect, another is expressive aspect. That creative aspect is called Mother, that silent aspect is called Father… of the Universe. One is called Shiva, another is called Shakti. Without Shakti, nothing can be created. This universe was directly created by Shakti. You see… ..source is Shiva, but Shiva without Shakti's help cannot create the universe. One is unmanifested power, another is manifestation. That which manifests is called Shakti, that which remains in unmanifested form though it is still there is called self-existent power – that is Shiva – and which manifests itself that's called Shakti. Fine discrimination is there.*

*"Then question what does mind do in sleep? Sleep means when there is no content in the mind, then that is called sleep. When thoughts are not active, they don't go to their chamber -- conscious mind -- they don't use their avenues -- their senses -- during that time you're in deep sleep. The moment there is some content in the mind, that is not sleep, it turns to dreams. And when your mind contacts your senses -- that employee -- then it's called waking state. But there is a state beyond waking, dreaming and sleeping that's called Turiya, the state beyond , in which you are on the top of the mountain seeing above, down below here, there and everywhere. That Turiya state is called kingdom of Beauty, where there lies Mother Divine, Shakti the power of powers."*



Driveby 2006. 10ft. X 150 ft. Coll. Cogswell.

**V.18**
**Your body glows crimson in the sunlit sky of a dappled dawn,**
**Bathing the whole earth with its crimson glory,**
**The Yogi, contemplating You, is overwhelmed by Himalayan nymphs with startled, gentle, wild deer eyes,**
**Along with Dawn and thousands of other celestial damsels.**

Here the Yogi contemplates the sky and the earth, the gross and the subtle, both saturated with the crimson of Shakti. The nymphs on the higher levels and damsels (apsaras) on the celestial level represent the awakened Nadis. They are also the senses, which seduce the Yogi away from his spiritual progress by stealing his intellect and Sankalpa. Urvasi (Dawn) is a prominent apsara messenger who brings the light of Divine Mother into each day.

The Seeker studies the ten senses, along with the projections of the mind. Inundated with beauty, recognizes that all of its forms have one source.

About 1hr 39min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"….That which combines the worldly senses and at the same time devotion. Devotion. What for do you want to devote, what for do you want to worship? To attain nearness."*

Having experienced the glory of Her alone, the Seeker remains unperturbed by the attractions of the senses, and practices one-pointedly and unrelentingly.

To summarize Swami Rama from Lecture 3: *Turiya is the abode of Mother from which she watches all three states: waking, dreaming, sleeping. Turiya is beyond Samadhi. Samadhi is a state of equilibrium and tranquility. Turiya is a state of deep sleep but still awake, sleepless sleep. Divine Mother & Lord Within. One and the same. Lord Within is silent aspect: unmanifested Shiva. Divine Mother is expressive aspect: manifested Shakti.*



**Warheads 2005. Stoneware, porcelain 4ft.**

**V.19**
**Your face as bindu, below that Your pair of breasts,**
**and below that Shiva's female half.**
**Whoever meditates on Your worldly form will instantly stir women to distraction —**
**But that's nothing, compared to arousing She of the three worlds,**
**Who bears the sun and moon as Her breasts.**

Here the image takes the Yogi to a vision of Tripura Sundari, She who lives in the three worlds of waking, dreaming and sleeping. There is an upward pointing triangle (Shiva) of face and breasts, and the downward pointing triangle (Shakti) of breasts and navel. The symbol of the heart chakra is the six-pointed star, made of upward and downward triangles. The language is highly erotic, indicating the passion of Shakti to unite with Shiva. Hara is one of Shiva's names, "Ha" the female aspect, "Ra" the male aspect. The bindu at Ajna is attainable after the sun and moon (right and left breasts) Nadis have been balanced in the heart center, along with prana and apana. The dance of Shiva and Shakti to the higher centers then begins.

The Seeker recognizes that physical lust is but an externalization of the higher longing for union with the Divine, or to state it differently, when Tripura Sundari is awakened in the Seeker's heart, the desire for divine union transcends the desire for physical union. Yes, the verses are written from a male viewpoint, but that was due to cultural constrictions of the time. The only writers were men, and perhaps women have easier access to this knowledge. But whether the Seeker is male or female, Divine Mother, as Swami Rama points out in his video lecture, is beyond male, female and time. Lecture 1, about 01:40:

*"It's not the worship of a woman, mother, it's not worship of man, father. It's the worship of Brahman. Not even worship of neuter gender. [It is worship of] the absolute truth which is changeless. Which is not subject to change, death and decay. That which is limitless; that infinite for which we do not have words, which is beyond explication. Which cannot be explained, which is inexplicable. (You see). But the method here is [undecipherable] your body is a shrine."*



**V.20**
**Like a glowing moonstone sculpture,**
**Your many sheltering arms offer amrit, the seed of life,**
**Those who can bring You into their hearts as Garuda, the King of Birds,**
**Can tame the serpent power,**
**And quench fever with the light of his presence.**

The Goddess is brought into Anahata, the heart chakra, as a cool glowing energy resembling moonstone. She is associated with the moon. Like Garuda (the Eagle or Vulture, the vehicle of Vishnu, also known as "Wings of Speech"), She tames the serpent power – quenches fever – with her cool nectar. Kundalini is directed upward, rather than dissipated. Garuda is understood as the possessor of true knowledge who can defeat the serpents, symbols of the cycles of time. To know Her is to transcend time. The heart as nexus of higher and lower chakras, vertical and horizontal, center of the cross: when opened to the Goddess, balances prana and apana, Shiva and Shakti, and that energy then fuels higher realization. Swami Rama, in No. 4 of the Saundaryalahari video lectures, talks about how when enough internal puja has been done in the heart center, the focus then automatically goes to Ajna chakra:

From Swami Rama Saundaryalahari video lecture No. 4: Time into video 01:00

[At the blackboard]: *"When you are fully aware that the lord, that Mother Divine is with me, then it's called Path of Samaya. You don't use these paths [Mishra and Kaula]. Then this above [draws circle] where you find first Ajna chakra [draws Ajna chakra inside a large, head-sized circle: a small circle with two "wings"]. Then your puja, your worship, moves, after you have done the worship in [heart] then you meditate on Ajna chakra. Mind has a tendency not to be inside a circle. It likes all other figures, but not circle…it hates. But here mind is… so much [three dots at heart] Puja has been done that mind has been trained to meditate on it."*

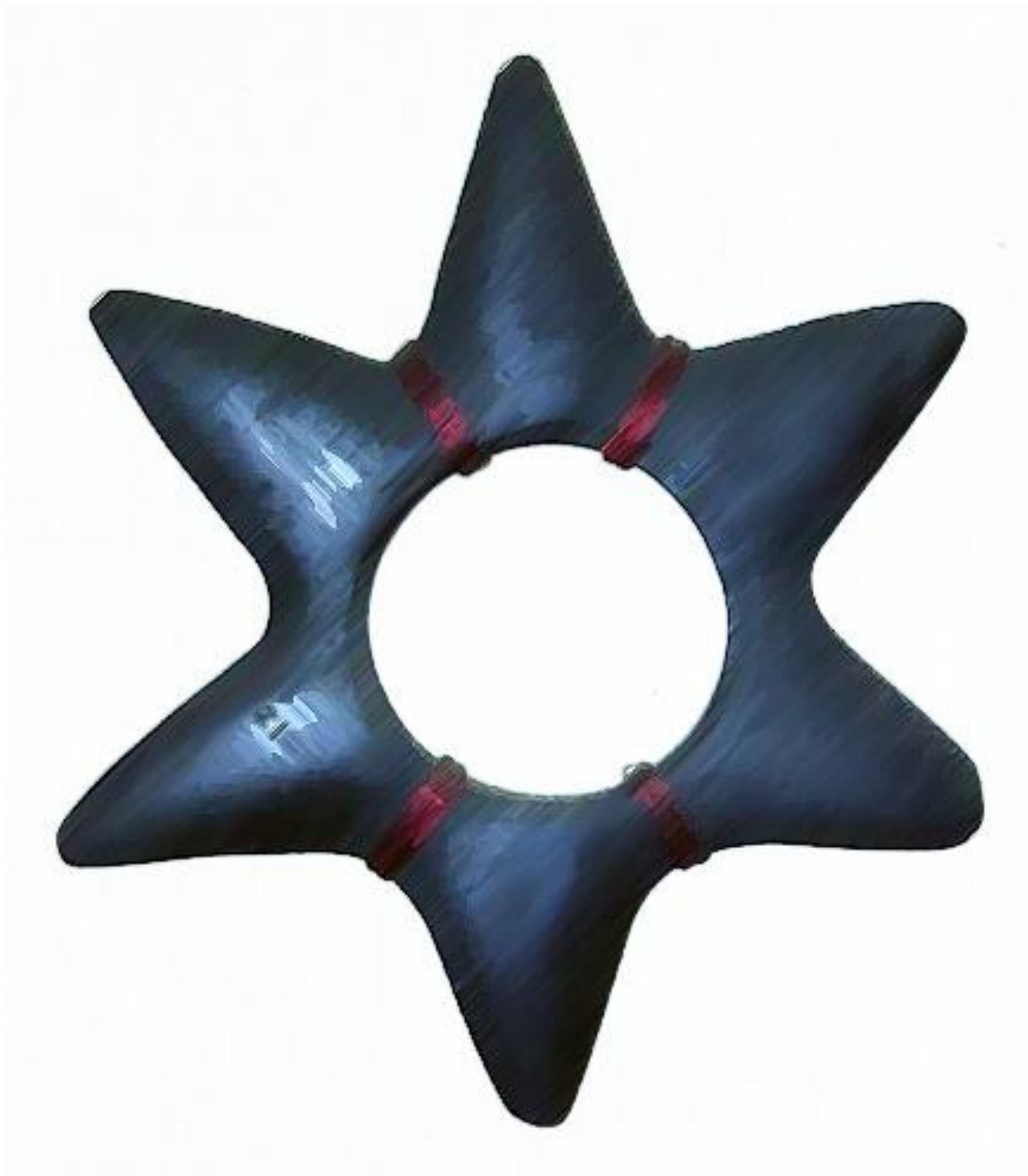
In Lecture 3 [about 1:40:00]: "*And the center is Ajna chakra here. After you have done this worship [at Anahata], you have organized your emotional body; when emotional body no more disturbs the lake of mind, or life, then we give the next step and that is called Ajna chakra. [Draws] You'll see all geometrical figures. It's easy to keep your mind busy on [square], it's easy to keep your mind within [triangle], it's easy to keep your mind in this figure, but mind refuses to be in a circle. Does not want to be in a circle. Does not want to be disciplined.*

*"Human nature is not to be disciplined, Human in human wants to be disciplined, because he has knowledge of the absolute. At least he can have a glimpse.*

*"You are a compound of three: animal, human and divine. Animal does not want to be, so there are Sattva, Rajasa, Tamasa. Tamasa does not want to be disciplined. The great symbol of Tamasa in Indian mythology is Ravana. He had all the powers, what was the difference between Rama's character and his? He was Tamasic, not sattvic. He was equally a devotee of Shiva, like Rama. Animal does not want, animal mind does not want to be in the circle. That's why animal mind is trained here [pointing to Anahata]. Animal mind means that negative part of mind which runs towards the world, and refuses to go to fathoms of finer forces of life within you. Rajasic mind and animal mind, animal mind is actually burnt here, [indicating Manipura], as gold is burnt in the fire. And then ornaments are made. Animal mind is burnt here. Then comes that purified mind, disciplined in Anahata, becomes human mind. That human mind is led and then given this circle. This is called Ajna chakra."*

In the Himalayan tradition, certain internal pujas (rituals) are done as part of preparation for going beyond puja.  These are called “manas (mind) puja”.

The Seeker’s heart fills with light and love, which affects everyone in the vicinity.



Prehistoric stone burial bracelet in form of two interlaced triangles, Myanmar

**V.21**
**Your path slender as a streak of lightning, composed of the essence of sun, moon, and fire,**
**You travel above the six lotuses (chakras), and seat Yourself in the lotus grove.**
**Great ones who have freed their minds of impurities and ignorance,**
**Experience a flood of supreme joy.**

Sushumna Nadi is often described as extremely slender. Continuing the upward journey from V. 20, Sushumna having been opened by tapas that purifies samskaras and allows the balancing of Ida (moon) and Pingala (sun), Kundalini passes through Ajna chakra, known as the "mouth of fire".

There is another meaning to sun, moon and fire:

From *Hatha Yoga Pradipika**, Chapter 3: (66-69): Hans-Ulrich Rieker comments:

*"When apana rises upward and reaches the fire orbit, the flame becomes large and bright, fanned by apana. When apana and the fire join with prana which by its nature is hot, then the fire of the body becomes especially bright and powerful. The Kundalini feels the great heat thereby and awakens from its sleep like a snake that is hit by a stick, hisses and raises itself. Then it enters the opening (of sushumna). Therefore the yogi should always practice mula bandha.*

*"From Chapter 3, The Asanas: As mentioned above, the "mountain in the center of the world" has the earth at its foot and the sky at its peak. Between earth and sky are the sun (the center of the planetary system) and the moon.*

*"Through this asana [ardha matsyendrasana – JD] the "moon" sphere is "massaged," which is all the more important as it is presumably here that we find the source of the fluid of life (kapha). But also the opposite pole, the "sun," is affected by this process of twisting the spinal column. And since it is here that the "fire of life" (pitta) originates, there arises from the combined work of these two well-springs a powerful stimulating influence upon the physiology of the body."*

*"In the center of the triangle formed by the navel and the two nipples is the "sun" (solar plexus); at the upper end of the spinal column, at the medulla oblongata, sits the "moon." "Sun" and "moon" are not chakras but are spheres that stand directly under the influence of two chakras, lying respectively just above and below."*

Swami Rama says, in "Energy of Consciousness in the Human Personality", from *Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama*:

*"We need to further elaborate as to how consciousness becomes operative in the personality. It is not subject to limitations of space, time, dimensions, or personalities in its full universal identification. It is sent forth into our being, which is made of lower and denser frequencies, like a straight beam of light penetrating through a rocky cave. Because the lower-frequency energies vibrate in a time-space reference, creating a physical body, a physical locus has to be assumed in us for that light which transcends all loci. So the yogis say that this immense, intense energy beam of consciousness, the Kundalini, is located in us in a channel extending from the base of the spine up to and engulfing the entire brain region. Though nonphysical (and therefore not tangible), it is experienced by the yogis in deep meditation as an unceasing flash of rod-like lightning shining with a light like that of ten thousand suns, yet as slim as though it*

*were a ten-thousandth of a hair's breadth in width. It passes through seven ever-vibrant and dynamic psycho physiological stations or centers into which it sends its sparks, whereby they become functional and the personality becomes operant. Thus the consciousness touches us and we come alive, becoming persons."*

The Seeker remembers the path from body to breath to mind and beyond mind; sits with spine, neck and head aligned, allows the breath to become smooth and serene, concentrates all energy in Sushumna, surrenders to Her.

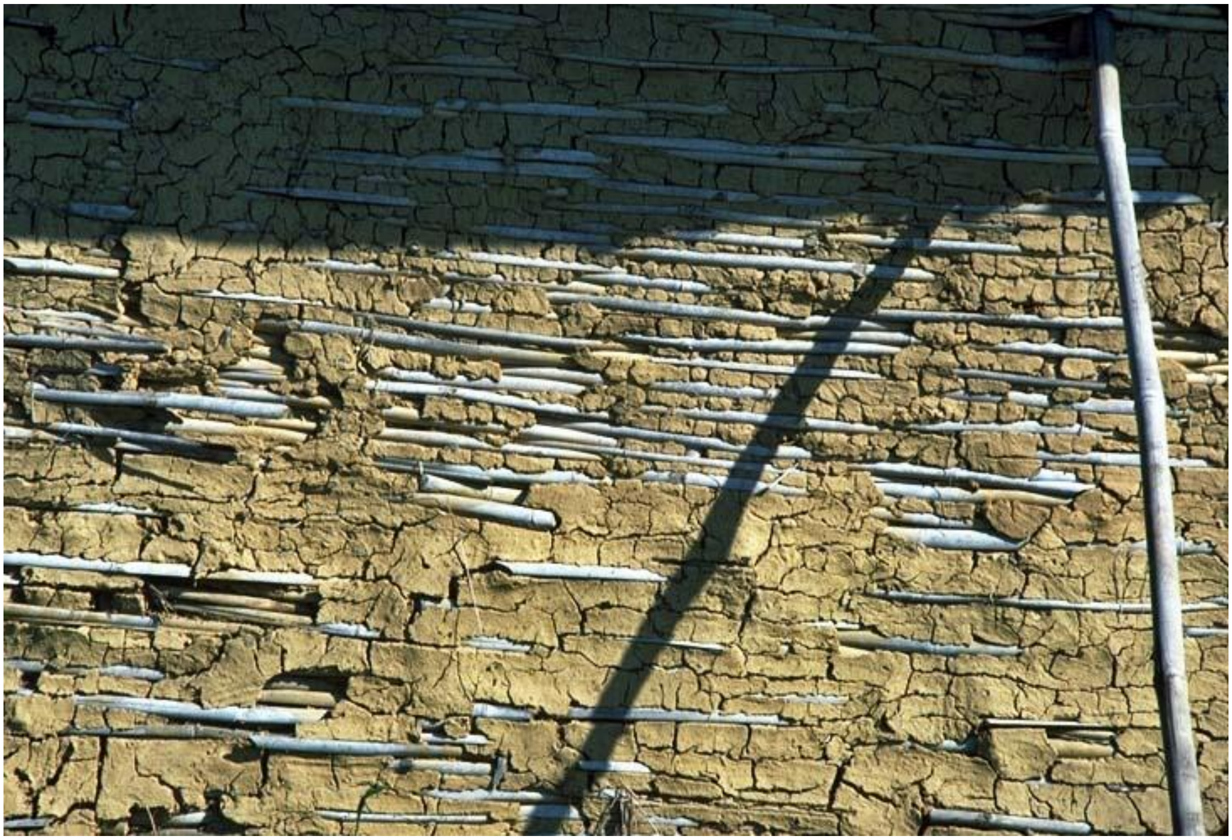
* *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Yoga Swami Svatmarama, Commentary by Hans Ulrich Rieker, The Aquarian Press 1992

Swami Rama presents the practice for purifying samskaras through internal dialogue and Guru Chakra in Lecture 4 about 1hr. 15min.: *"Finest of all therapies, no therapist in the world can do such a good job. You sit down. You ask your mind, now recall all the thoughts. If you sit down one day and ask how many good things you have done in your life, it will be difficult for you to remember. It will be easy for you to remember how many odd things you have done, mind will bring thousands and thousands of odd things. According to your knowledge and growth, sometimes you take something very seriously which you should not. But what to do? That's your habit. I'm not beautiful, you say. Who says that you are not beautiful? Others? But you are you, you are the most beautiful in the world, learn to appreciate yourself. I am not a good person. Why? I have many guilt feelings. You have simply learned bad things that [are put in] storage – holding things. After you have learned how to sit, you come with your mind. First ask your mind to sit here [points to Ajna]. Anything that comes offer it to the fire of knowledge." [in Guru Chakra]*

In Lecture 3, 42 min: *"The way you are going analyzing and understanding function of your mind, manas, chitta, buddhi and ahamkara. You can have a dialogue with yourself, by understanding: 'Is it my mind that is confusing?' When you are confused, sit down. You are confused because you have not taken decision. You have not asked your buddhi. Mind will give you many suggestions. 'Which way should I go? This way? This way?' Unless mind takes help from buddhi it will be always confused. You are confused because your buddhi is not functioning well. Remember this. Any confused person is not using buddhi. How do two and two make four? If you don't use your buddhi you will be confused. Dialogue means time to be aware, this mind, this manas is confusing me. Why should I not take help from my buddhi? What is my ego? Ego helps in the external world. We can polish and refine that ego and use it. For right purpose. So you think ego is that faculty which is always bad? No. Bad ego is bad. So when you understand four aspects [manas, chitta, ahamkara and buddhi –JD] of entering into dialogue, that dialogue will help you sometimes to go beyond. What is beyond? All this wheel. What is beyond this wheel? You have to face a train of thoughts mixed with emotions, and then a process you have to start which is called introspection. Inspecting within is called introspection. Because the time you have learned how not to identify yourself with thought patterns; suddenly you remember your childhood, now you're an adult you don't like it. And during meditation when conscious mind is calm, what becomes active? Unconscious becomes active. [looking like meditating] And you'll say what is all this? Swamiji taught me meditation but my mind is very active."*

About 15 min into Lecture 1: *"The greatest of all barriers in the path of enlightenment is ego. Ego is needed as far as external attainment, external world, mundane things in the world are needed. It creates a serious problem when you want to attain spirituality. And that habit which you form – this is my body, this is my breath, this is my mind. When somebody is feeling pain*

*you don't feel, because of ego. Ego has created a block for you, isolated yourself from the whole, and that is why you have become a small, miserable unit. You feel helpless, sorry for yourself, because of ego. When you understand your internal self, as you function outside with two legs and two arms, there is a human in you that you inside should be understood. And for that you'll have to learn a special dialogue. Communicating with yourself."*



**V.22**
**Oh Lady, Giver-of-Existence, may I become You,**
**The moment these words dissolve in full realization there is instant union,**
**Just as the Trinity of Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva**
**Dissolve into oneness through illumination.**

The first line is a Mahavakya or great saying ("I am that"), and the moment itit is fully realized (not just mouthed), unity occurs. I interpret the trinity as the three gunas, which dissolve into pure realization.

The Seeker goes beyond meditation to contemplation of the Mahavakyas (Great essential sayings).

Swami Rama says in *Enlightenment Without God*: *"The observer and the observed create a dualistic reality, while the aspirant's aim is to realize the Absolute. Here meditation ends, and the higher step of contemplation helps one to realize that one's real self is the Self of all. One also realizes that the realities experienced during waking, dreaming, and sleeping are only apparent realities, and the self-existent reality of turiya alone is the one all-pervading reality." He adds to this that without the preparation of meditation, contemplation is a waste of effort. Meditation and contemplation are complementary.*"

Contemplation is different than thinking. The standard mahavakyas listed here have a progression from gross to subtle to center of consciousness. The layers of "what I am not" peel away, the truth dawns. The Seeker sits in stillness, the words dissolve into direct knowledge…

Brahman is real; the world is unreal
Brahman is one, without a second
Brahman is the supreme knowledge
That is what You are
Atman and Brahman are the same
I am Brahman

| *Sanskrit: note that "Brahma" here does not mean the god, but translates into English as "Brahman". This is confusing.* | *English: "Brahman" is sometimes called "That"* |
|---|---|
| 1. Brahma satyam jagan mithya | Brahman is real; the world is unreal |
| 2. Ekam evadvitiyam brahma | Brahman is one, without a second |
| 3. PrAjnanam brahma | Brahman is the supreme knowledge |
| 4. Tat tvam asi | That is what You are |
| 5. Ayam atma brahma | Atman and Brahman are the same |
| 6. Aham brahmasmi | I am Brahman |
| 7. Sarvam khalvidam brahma | All of this is Brahman |

Swami Rama says (transcribed from Saundaryalahari No. 4, 12:55): *"So much time and we forget that there is someone eternal seated within us who is our real friend. We forget that. A constantly present friend within you. I'm going to make you aware of that presence, that friend within you. You need real closeness, and that's the third path called Samaya; I am with you".*

*When you have this awareness that the lord is with me, the lord of life is with me, then there will be no fear.  Fear of what?   It has only two reasons:  of losing what you have, and of not gaining what you want."*



**Basin 2005.  Stoneware 3ft.**

**V. 23**
**You took over the left half of Shiva, but that was not enough to satisfy You,**
**So You stole the other half of His body,**
**Now You are formless all encompassing crimson,**
**But on this plane we recognize You by Your three eyes, pair of breasts slightly bowing Your body, and the crescent moon on Your crown.**

Shiva (also known as Shambu) as Ardhanarishvara has been completely occupied by Shakti, only recognizable as the crimson that pervades all substance. On the level of form, Ardhanarishvara is the form of Shiva that is divided vertically: the right side is male, the left side female. Three eyes are common to both Shiva and Shakti, and to the Seeker having this realization of She who lives in the three cities: represented doubly as the three eyes, and also as a triangle of two breasts and the crescent moon at the top. The crescent moon is the silent nasalization of AUM, which is another way of representing the three cities.



**Ardhanarishvara (Maithili painting)**

Swami Rama transcribed from Saundaryalahari video Lecture 3, time 47:51: *"About the mother divine in you, who has created this structure, who has given you beauty, who has given you all that you have. That Mother is there in you, that's direct Shakti. Sun without its light is not sun, as sun is different from the light, but sun cannot exist without light, therefore the atman cannot live without atma Shakti. If there's no atma Shakti, there's no atman. If there's no light, there's no sun, sun is different from its light and they're both the same. So it is with Mother Divine and Siva, the ultimate reality which is not subject to change. It has no gender. It's not she. It's not he. It's not child. It's not old. Though it has no name, no form, yet you use a name and form to go beyond the name and form.*

About 1hr 50min into Lecture 3: *"So I came to one conclusion, and I want to give you one thing, when you start meditating, don't try to see the light. Don't have that I want to see light. I want to see blue light, purple light, white light, gold light, don't do that. These lights will come and disappear according to the predominance of tattvas. One day you will see golden lights, one day a blue light, that's not progress. Those lights you see, you have glimpsed because of tattvas. You have five tattvas – elements -- related to this; fire, when oxygen is active you'll see a blue light. Many times a meditator feels fragrance, and that's not untrue, during that time he's one with the Prithvi [earth] Tattva. Fragrance the quality of the Tattva. Many times a student sees himself floating in the water. Many times he will feel burning sensation because of tattvas. Predominance of tattvas. One of the tattvas remains predominant. … Therefore the way we are taught, the way we are trained, not to worry about seeing light. Suppose you've seen light, what has happened to you? These lights have made you crazy. That is not right teaching. So the teachers of meditation say: 'Learn to make your abode in complete darkness.'* How do you observe that this is darkness and this light? Because at the time your light within becomes very observant and alert. You experience darkness. It's very easy to experience and imagine light, but it's difficult to observe darkness and maintain that darkness for some time, I'll tell you that. The student is asked to observe darkness, complete darkness. Why? So that you can see real light far and far away. [points] The teacher gives him initiation on the Ajna chakra bhedana, meditating on the Ajna chakra, and he says in the Ajna chakra [is a] completely dark oval type*

*[draws linga] this figure you meditate.  Don't go towards the words and aksharas [syllables] Otherwise you'll be lost singing …. whole day….. what you'll find -- you will find the light coming through."*

*  "Complete darkness" means the complete darkness that appears after the jnanendriya of sight is withdrawn.  It does not mean sitting in a dark room with a blindfold over the eyes.

The Seeker reflects on form and no form.  Then centers attention in Ajna chakra, finding the darkness behind the lights.



**Cup 2007.  Porcelain 4in.**

**V.24**
**Brahma creates the world,**
**Vishnu minds it,**
**Shiva destroys it,**
**Ishvara causes all of it to disappear,**
**Then disappears himself into Sadashiva,**
**And Sadashiva, moved by a brief flicker of Your eyebrows,**
**Restores them all as before.**

This is another way of expressing the fourth state of consciousness, in which waking, dreaming and sleeping are transcended and perceived for what they are. Sadashiva represents the primordial form of Shiva, before space/time and any of Maya is manifested, before the three gunas begin their dance. Ishvara can be understood as the controller of Maya – the representative of Brahman which permeates this world. Shakti brings it back from total annihilation with the slightest vibration of her eyebrows, which are used to represent a vritti (wave) in the sea of chitta. Ramana Maharshi said: ""the universe is real if perceived as the Self, and unreal if perceived apart from the Self."

The lines are a concise description of the eternal return: the existence, dissolution and rebirth of the world of name and form. All are contained in the Now. The Seeker sits with head, neck and trunk erect, exhaling from the top of the head to the tip of the tailbone, inhaling from Muladhara to Sahasrara, eliminating the pause, extending the transition.

Swami Rama says in Saundaryalahari video No. 2, about 1hr20min.: *"If there will be no pause, then you have annihilated time. You got Kripa of mother. You have done your effort. You have got the Kripa of the Mother Divine. For time, space and causation are directly under her kind control. And nobody can annihilate [her]. Even Rama after many thousands of years he forgot his time was over. King of death comes to visit and says: 'Sir your time is over.' Yogi's time is never over, is beyond all these laws. If he had known how to annihilate this pause. Pause means death. If I exhale and never inhale I'm dead. If I inhale and never exhale I'm dead. Pause means death. If you know how to annihilate pause you're free."*

*"Those who practice this, that particular group is called pranavedin—those who know the mysteries of the pranas, the subtler forces of life. So they omit this. Exhale, a pause comes, then you inhale. Inhale, a pause comes. So you try to omit these two pauses. And then you have got capacity to expand. You can exhale and wait. You can inhale and wait. That is called kumbhaka. This is called rechaka. This is called puraka, and this is called kumbhaka."*

About 1hr. into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"Here you'll find [points at Ajna chakra] sometimes you have glimpse of the past, most of the time -- and sometimes about future, because mind has two tendencies. Mind often runs to the grooves of the past, and on the basis of the past experiences [samskaras] mind does something and then runs to the future. In this process mind does not know how to be here and now. But as long as you are concentrating on one point [Ajna] what is actually and literally, how do you explain to anybody intellectually what meditation means? If you are a meditator you should have an explanation. A thought comes, a thought comes,… always there is a space between two thoughts. Not to allow this pause is called meditation : only one thought. One thought, persistently one thought, is meditation. If you allow one thought to come and then another thought to come and then…. It could be*

*contemplation, but it's not meditation. No thought is allowed to come, only one. What do you do during that time a thought comes? Do you get angry? Do you use your force?"*

**V. 24 Part 2**

**Removing the Veils of Ignorance**

1hr 20 min. into Lecture 4: *"So there is a third therapy. The highest of all fires is called jnana [pronounced Gyana] fire, fire of knowledge. All fires are petty in front of her. Jnana -- knowledge. And for that fire of knowledge you could call it Guru. Guru means that which dispels darkness of ignorance. It's a fire, it's knowledge. So particularly this is called jnana or guru chakra or Trikuti [points to upper forehead]. Put your thumb here and then from it starts Trikuti. [draws triangle one thumb width above Ajna].*

*"After you have attained a still posture, serene breath and start dealing with your mind, manasprakshadanam comes. How to purify your mind. Finest of all therapies, no therapist in the world can do such a good job. You sit down. You ask your mind, now recall all the thoughts. If you sit down one day and ask how many good things you have done in your life, it will be difficult for you to remember. It will be easy for you to remember how many odd things you have done, mind will bring thousands and thousands of odd things. According to your knowledge and growth, sometimes you take something very seriously which you should not. But what to do? That's your habit. I'm not beautiful, you say. Who says that you are not beautiful? Others? But you are you, you are the most beautiful in the world, learn to appreciate yourself. 'I am not a good person.' Why? 'I have many guilt feelings.' You have simply learned bad things that [are put in] storage – holding things.*

*"After you have learned how to sit, you come with your mind. First ask your mind to sit here [points to Ajna]. Anything that comes offer it to the fire of knowledge. Now suppose I have stolen something, no one knows. And I feel guilty that I should not have stolen that. That thought comes while you are sitting in meditation, then you are not fit for meditation. Suppose such a thought comes, offer that thought to the fire of knowledge. You have offered it to others – once you give something to somebody, you don't say "give it back". You don't say that. One after another, you offer all the thoughts that come to you, offer to the fire of knowledge. This way, if that thought which you have offered up comes to you, it will not come in ugly form and you can say 'But I already offered you to the fire. Why are you coming to me again? From where? Oh it's not really thought, it's just a simple memory.' It's like a rope that has tied you, it has burned, it has no power to tie, but it leaves its ashes. This way you can remove, you can be free of your negativity. Then you have confidence I have offered all such thoughts, offered all oblations to this fire. In this, mentally first thing is to evoke guru chakra, this fire of knowledge. And then offer all the thoughts. There are three main layers of thoughts in your mind: deeply bedded, which you are not aware of, latent, which you can awaken according to the situation, and there are day to day thoughts. It's very easy to get rid of all these thoughts and go beyond the mire of thoughts."*



**Marble Buddha polishing, Mandalay, Myanmar**

**V.25**
**The three gods that emerge from Your three gunas**
**Stand eternally in front of the jeweled footstool which supports Your feet,**
**With hands joined over their heads they adore You.**
**Worship of Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva is worship of You only.**

Different levels of worship are presented to the Seeker. One way to understand this is that gunas without attributes operate at the causal level, when they migrate to the subtle level they clothe themselves in names and forms. At the worldly level, the Seeker worships anthropomorphic images of Vishnu (Sattva), Brahma (Rajas) and Shiva (Tamas). Until the Seeker has experience of that from which they emerge, they veil the truth of the Goddess by standing in front of Her. Only when the mind is dissolved does the Goddess reveal herself in her pure, formless form, which is non-dual. In the sense that the eternal always is present in the transient, worship of the anthropomorphic gods is automatically worship of Her.

Swami Rama writes in *Life Here and Hereafter*, P. 101: *"The human intellect is part of the cosmic intellect or cosmic ego. The cosmic ego is called Hiryanyagarbha or Saguna Ishvara. Beyond cosmic ego is undifferentiated energy, which produces intellect and which is the Mother of all…. Beyond undifferentiated energy is the absolute Brahman, our real Self."*

Swami Rama transcribed from Video Lecture 1, about 35 min.: *"In Shri Vidya there is one thing very wonderful and that is you don't have to visit the temple...a student of Shri Vidya can go to synagogue, temple, church, Shiva temple, Krishna temple, anywhere, it doesn't matter. For him and her, everything is one and the same. It's not the worship of a woman, mother, it's not worship of man, father. It's the worship of Brahman. Not even worship of neuter gender. [It is worship of] the absolute truth which is changeless. Which is not subject to change, death and decay. That which is limitless; that infinite for which we do not have words, which is beyond explication. What cannot be explained, what is inexplicable. (You see). But the method here is [undecipherable] your body is a shrine."*

The Seeker determines to go straight to the source of the three gunas.

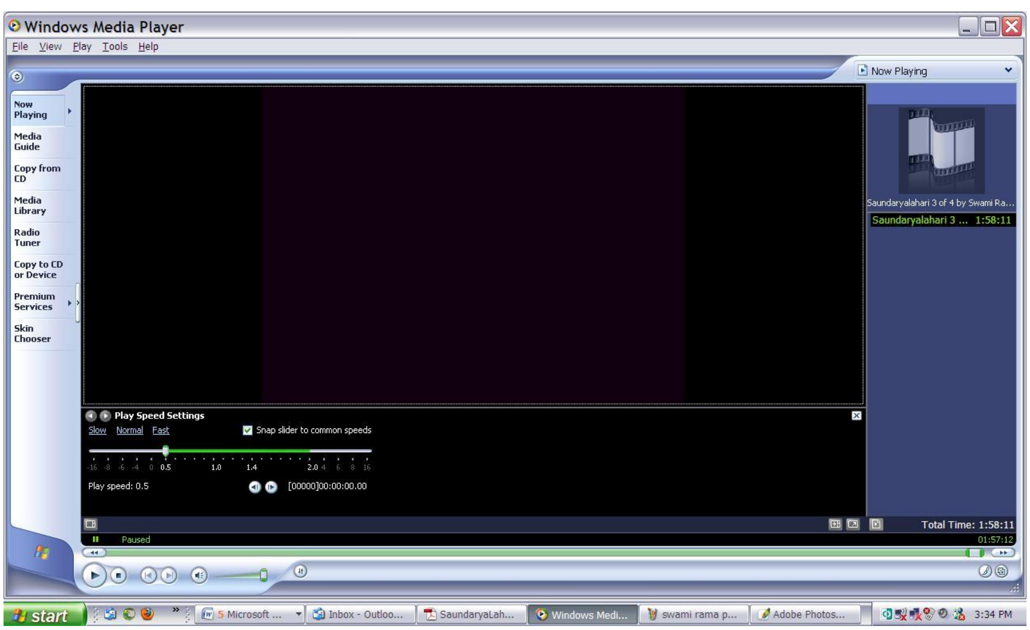


**V.26**
**At the time of total dissolution, the final curtain call,**
**Brahma dissolves into the five elements, Vishnu recedes into passivity,**
**Even Yama (Death) dies, Kubera (God of Wealth) is bankrupt,**
**Great Indra's thousand eyes grow weary and close half way —**
**Only You and Sadashiva stay on stage to play.**

The Seeker continues the journey into the Absolute, as the mental constructs dissolve one by one, finally leaving only Shakti and Sadashiva, united. It means going beyond the constraints of the mind. Sadashiva is the primal manifestation of Shiva before form and attributes.

Swami Rama in Lecture 4 about 1hr 25min: *"Without mind you can attain Turiya, with mind you cannot, with this sort of mind that you have, no. Either you create or you completely forget that you have mind, then you can attain. Mind works only in certain fields. Mind cannot work beyond, and you have to go beyond, so you have to drop mind whether it's pure, impure or disciplined. Impure mind does not allow you to go to that stage. Pure mind gets there, cannot go beyond this and does not disturb you. A good mind, trained mind, orderly mind is that mind that does not create obstacles for you, which has stopped creating obstacles for you, and when you want to use it in the world it should be used, when you do not want it don't use, during meditation it should not disturb you. A serious problem is over if you have consciously asked all the thoughts coming and offered them to guru chakra."*

50min. into Lecture 1*: "All the pains and anxieties live only here [conscious mind], all the pains and anxieties live here, on the body, breath, senses and conscious mind. Then there is no anxiety after this [latent unconscious mind]. Because you don't have vehicle for anxiety, for expressing your anxiety. If it is, it remains in dormant latent state. Anything that is expressed is expressed through conscious mind. So first thing that you should do make full effort to convince yourself to accept this "I'm a shrine of the lord". First thing. It's not enough to believe in God. You say I believe in God, because I believe in my church, I am a Catholic, I am a Hindu, I am Buddhist, I am etc. It's not enough to lead a happy life, not enough to make you happy. You all have religions. You all have churches. So what? Still you are suffering. Sometimes I find you suffering more than those who do not have."*



**V.27**
**Let every word from my mouth be a prayer, every movement of my hands be a mudra,**
**May every step take me on pilgrimage, may the food in my jaws be a fire sacrifice.**
**I will only lie down when it is a prostration, and every pleasure will be an act of self-surrender,**
**May all of my actions be worship of You.**

Having had a glimpse of the Absolute, with the direct experience that Shiva and Shakti are one, the Seeker fully surrenders to Her. Every act is an act of worship, yet there is no attachment to either the acts or the objects.

Swami Rama from Lecture 2, at the beginning: "*Here you are not praying to somebody who is outside you. Here means constant awareness. When you are praying, you have to be humble. Being humble means learning to compose yourself. Oh lord of life, oh my inner dweller, all that who gives me light, the truth; gives me power to hear, think, analyze. Who gives me power, energy to walk, to do things in the external world, oh that center of power within me. Let me draw strength directly from you…. You are the whole source of strength. This way you can pray in your own language. It means constant awareness. Who is praying to whom? You are training your mind and a particular part of your mind that is called your Ego. You are making your Ego aware of this truth. Otherwise Ego refuses to accept that. If you really want to be humble, and you want to enjoy life, you'll have to change your Ego."*

In all spiritual teachings, there is discussion of Ego or Ahamkara, one of the four functions of mind (manas, buddhi, ahamkara, chitta), as the greatest obstacle to enlightenment. Ahamkara is simply the function that says "I am", that which gives us an identity. That is a necessary part of existence. The problem is that this identity is what separates us from the whole from which we arose, and likes to think that it is the center of the universe. The spiritual path requires training Ahamkara by expanding it to know that it is Brahman, the Absolute. Then it is no longer the center of the universe, but an emanation of the center that knows its oneness with all phenomena, and is no longer an obscuration of the greater truth. Some (including Swami Rama in certain situations) say to "cut off" Ahamkara, and perhaps that's possible. However, these bodies/minds require Ahamkara in order to continue their existence. Better to train and refine Ahamkara to know its true place in the natural order. Meditation and internal dialogue remove the illusory veils of separateness. Contemplation of "Who am I" reveals the truth.


Potter making roof tiles, Janakpur, Nepal

**V.28**
**Existing in a sea of nectar, isolated from fear, old age and death,**
**Gods like Brahma, Indra and the rest are caught in the realm of time and finally disappear,**
**Only Shiva has swallowed the poison of time and is immortal with You,**
**Thanks to the power of Your twin earrings.**

Even the gods are mortal, since they are creations of the mind, and as such are bound by space and time. Only Shiva and Shakti when they are united transcend all dimensions, and they are never separate except in the relative world. Shiva swallowed the poison that resulted from the churning of the sea of milk, thus separating timeless knowledge from ignorance bound in time. He is saved from extinction because Shakti continues to wear her earrings – the sun and the moon, timelessness – whereas a Hindu widow takes hers off when her husband dies.

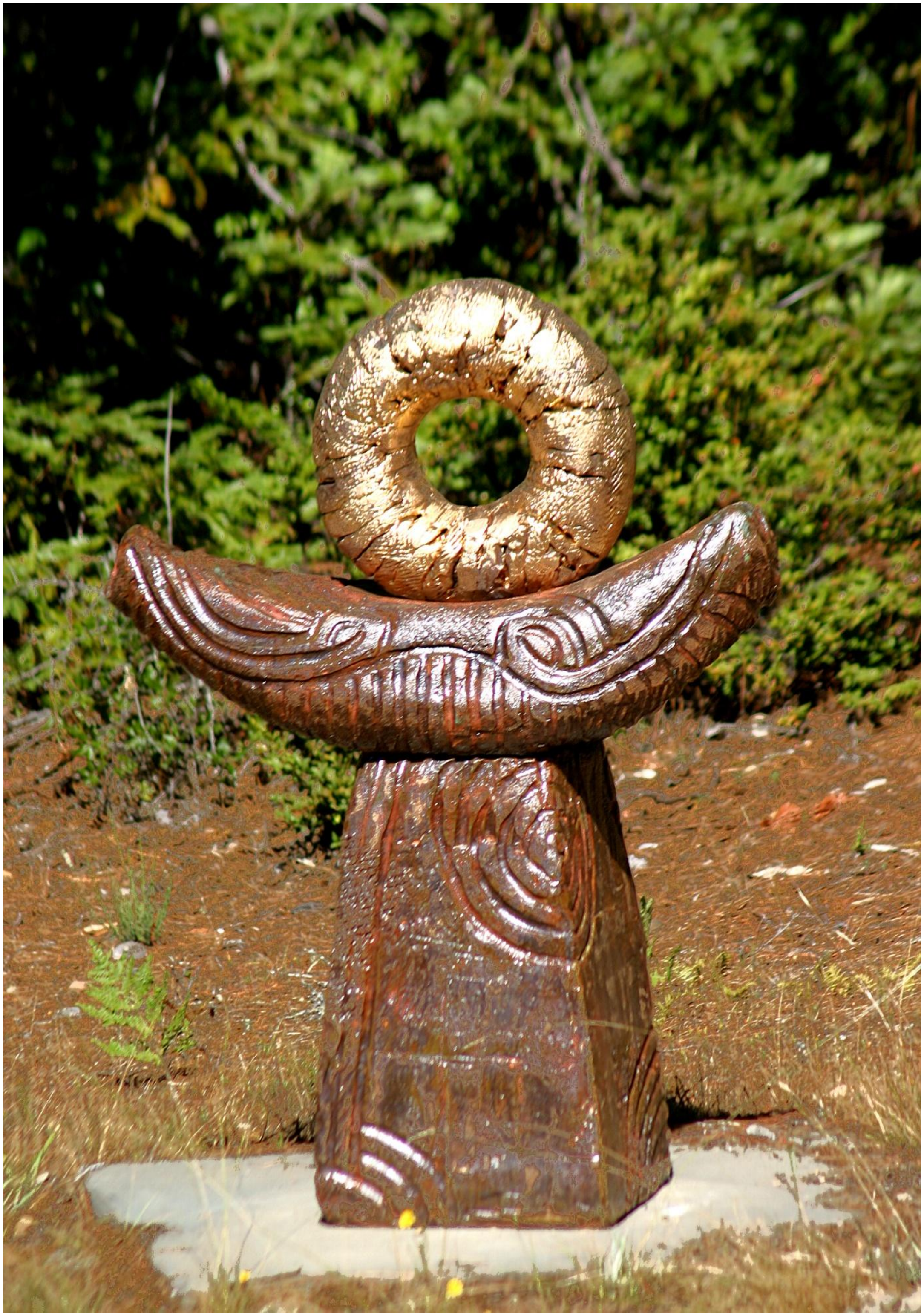
52 min. into Lecture 2: *"So when your posture has become steady and comfortable, what do you attain -- second thing? Breathing…. What do you mean by breathing? You forget the lessons… [more guessing from audience]. I want to give you the gist, I want to give you short cut this time. I don't want to go through lengthy process. That's what Samaya Marga is. All the practices of breathing are done, are practiced to regulate the motion of lungs. All the respiratory practices, all the practices of pranayama in which kumbhaka is involved, ratio is involved, they are done to have cordial relationship with mind. Mind and breath are twin laws of life. And they work together, they function together, they live together, they are the best friends."*

In Lecture 2, about 1hr 22min, Swami Rama says (about breathing) : *"If there will be no pause, then you have annihilated time. You got Kripa of Mother. You have done your effort. You have got the Kripa of the Mother divine. For time, space and causation are directly under Her kind control. And nobody can annihilate [Her]. Even Rama -- after many thousands of years he forgot his time was over. King of death comes to visit and says Sir your time is over. Yogi's time is never over, is beyond all these laws. If he [knows] how to annihilate this pause. Pause means death. If I exhale and never inhale I'm dead. If I inhale and never exhale I'm dead. Pause means death."*

*1hr. 14min. into Lecture 2: "Breath and mind when they are perfectly coordinated and the practice is accomplished, then they function this way. There is no pause at all [draws big circle to represent breath cycle]. Pause means death. Means you have annihilated death when you have done breathing like this. Past, present and future become one and the same. Theoretically it's easy to understand, practically it's difficult to accomplish, but yogis do accomplish."*

Pranayama is taught by different schools in different ways. In the Himalayan Tradition, the goal of pranayama is not a lot of huffing and puffing, but simply to engage sushumna – the central nadi of the subtle spine; that requires the breath to become more and more subtle. Kumbhaka – retention when the breath is stopped – is a pause, and creates a jerk when engaging and disengaging. It may be useful training for learning the limitations of the breath, but is a diversion from meditation. The Seeker vows to eliminate the pause and extend the transition between inhale and exhale, exhale and inhale. The preliminary exercise is exhaling from head to tailbone, and inhaling from tailbone to head. When the breath is fully circular, it may seem to stop completely. Even though there is still movement of the diaphragm and lungs, there is no awareness of breathing. That is Kevala Kumbhaka, spontaneous and effortless, establishing a

motionless pranic field. Breathing exercises are useful training for pranayama, and are done with the body; pranayama is done with the mind.



**Bindu 2005. Stoneware 5ft.**

**V.29**
**When Shiva comes home**
**Your retinue warns: "Take off Brahma's crown!**
**Don't trip over the Kaitabha crusher's crest!**
**Look out for Indra's headdress!"**
**Once those illusions dissolve, You rise up.**
**There is nobody but Shiva in your palace.**

Don't get caught in the illusory beauty of the Gods, whether Brahma or Vishnu, sometimes known as the Kaitabha crusher (Kaitabha was one of a pair of genii who stole the Vedas, which were recovered by Vishnu). They are only a mask that veils Her. When the Seeker realizes that these gods and demi-gods are obstacles, immediately Shakti rises to join with Shiva.

Why Indra? He is the ruler of the sphere of space, so this most likely refers to Vishuddha chakra, the highest chakra still attached to the 5 earthly elements. Once it opens, Shakti can rise to Ajna where she joins with Shiva as Ardhanarishvara: joined but still separate, something like earrings.

According to Vedanta, "An illusion is a false appearance, but an appearance is of necessity based on a reality; for no illusory thing can exist without a support, and the reality of the support remains, pervading the illusion. In worshipping the illusion, or its manifestations, one worships the reality behind it, the unknowable Immensity on which it rests." (quoted in Danielou from Karapatri, Sri Bhagavati Tattva").

In Lecture 4, 1hr 28min, Swami Rama says: *"Without mind you can attain Turiya, with mind you cannot, with this sort of mind that you have, no. Either you create or you completely forget that you have mind, then you can attain. Mind works only in certain fields. Mind cannot work beyond, and you have to go beyond, so you have to drop mind whether it's pure, impure or disciplined. Impure mind does not allow you to go to that stage. Pure mind gets there, cannot go beyond this and does not disturb you. A good mind, trained mind, orderly mind is that mind that does not create obstacles for you, which has stopped creating obstacles for you and when you want to use it in the world it should be used, when you do not want it, don't use it, during meditation it should not disturb you. A serious problem is over if you have consciously asked all the thoughts coming and offered them to guru chakra."*

*33 min. into Lecture 1: "Vidya means knowledge, but there is something called avidya too, -- absence of knowledge. First step: anything we can perceive through our senses, and then we try to conceptualize, that is not knowledge, right knowledge. Because your mind is clouded and your mind has employed ten senses which you are using in the external world, that clouded owner of the ten senses, master, misleads you and whole life you remain in a world of fantasy. And never come in touch with the reality. Therefore that is not considered to be knowledge. Knowledge through senses is not perfect. It's partial knowledge."*



**Vishnu Schist 2004 (detail). Stoneware.**

**V.30**
**Your body is veiled by rays of psychic powers,**
**beginning with the ability to be the smallest.**
**Perceived by one who has become Brahman,**
**These powers are discarded as false gifts from three-eyed Shiva.**
**May I be totally consumed by You.**

Don't get attached to special powers or sensations (lights, visions, etc.) that may arise along the practice path. They only obscure the goal and bind us to small ego. The Seeker becomes aware of the siddhis, or powers that become available in worship and practice, but rather than getting caught in that trap, worships Shakti as himself, "I am that". He would rather dissolve completely into the Self, than be caught by the attachment to powers.

Some of the siddhis are:

1. anima: the power to become as small as an atom
2. laghima: the power to become lightweight
3. prapti: the power to obtain everything
4. prakamya: the power to be irresistibly strong
5. mahima: the power of increasing size at will
6. vasitva: the power of mastering one's self
7. kamavasayin: the power of suppressing desire
8. dura sravana: hearing from afar
9. sarvajnatva: omniscience
10. agni stambha: the power to magically quench fire.

At 14min in Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"Once I was traveling towards Gangotri in deep Himalayas where Ganga flows with my master. There is a place called Harisil [?] where avalanche was coming down….so I was seven to eight years of age, and I said now we are going to die. This avalanche is going to disturb. He looked at me and said keep quiet. And there was no way for us to run this side or go forward, for we were trapped. He wouldn't stop when he walked, that was his … so he did like this [puts arm into air], he always used to say "mmm" and I was the only interpreter of that 'mmm" when I used to feed him he said "mmm", means he wants more or not. "mmm" a glass of water, you see. So I interpreted his "mmm" very well. So he said "mmm", and we walked half a mile distance, we crossed, he did like that [hand gesture] and that avalanche started coming down [again] and it blocked even the course of the river Ganges. It created an unprecedented disaster in India at that time. It blocked the river, it became a huge lake.*

*"Many times I saw like that. And I used to say you are not teaching me this [laughter]. You are not teaching me this. He said this will come according your practice and experience. Don't hanker for all these so-called powers. Don't do that. Human potentials are immense. If you study lives of great people, whenever they said "it's not me, it's God.." why did they say that God has done? Are they lying? Because if they said it has been done by us it will feed their egos. The greatest of all barriers in the path of enlightenment is ego. Ego is needed as far as external attainment, external world, mundane things in the world are needed. It creates a serious problem when you want to attain spirituality. And that habit which you form – this is my body, this is my breath, this is my mind. When somebody is feeling pain you don't feel, because of ego. Ego has created a block for you, isolated yourself from the whole, and that is why you have become a small, miserable unit. You feel helpless, sorry for yourself, because of ego."*


Temple pillar at Kyundaw Monastery

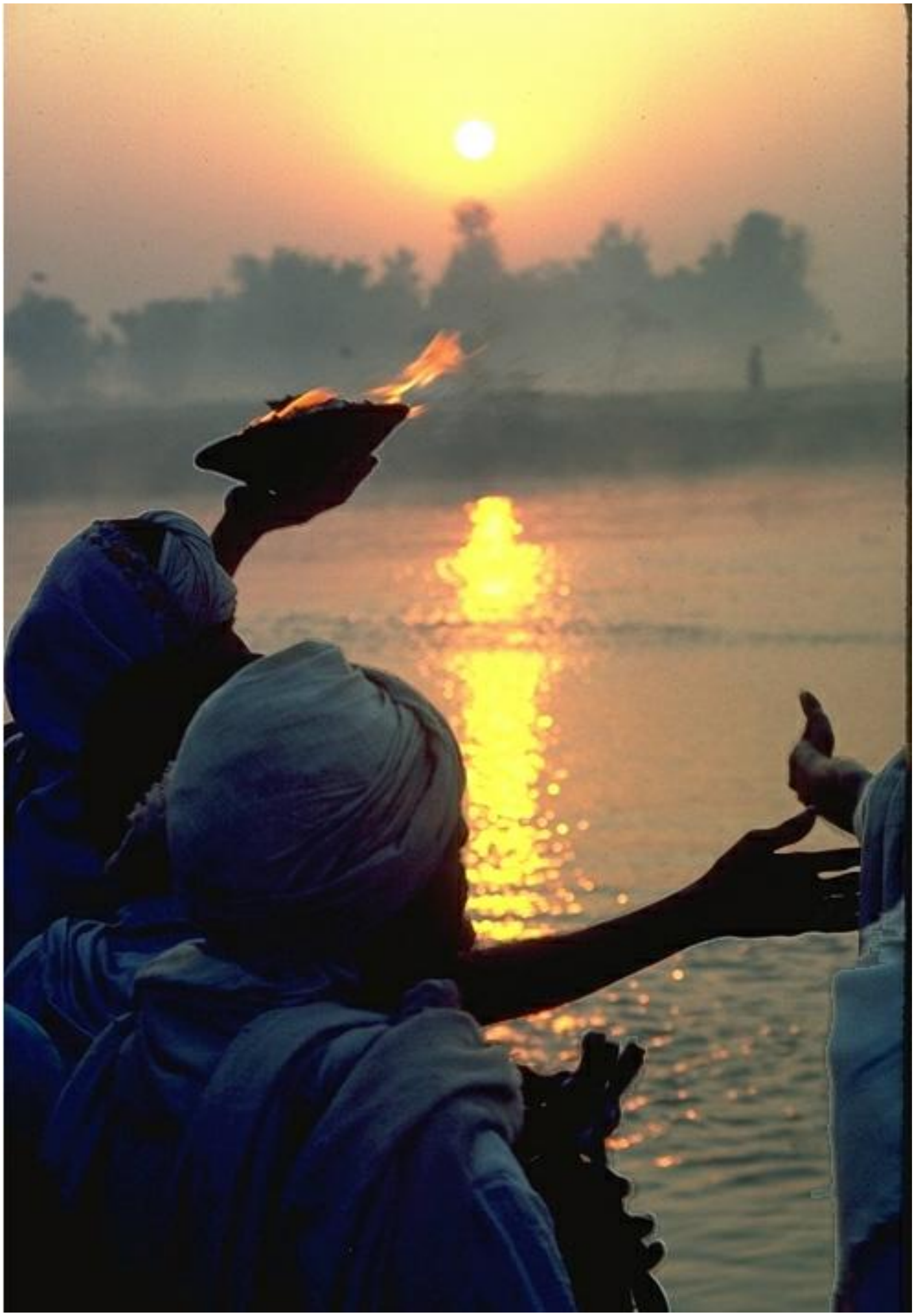
**V.31**
**Pashupati created sixty-four tantras to control the earth,**
**Then went off to nap for a few kalpas.**
**But You showed him Shri Vidya,**
**Your tantra which grants the devotee**
**All powers that give powers over all the states in life.**

Pashupati is the Herdsman, meaning feeder of sacrifices. As such, he represents the embodiment of the ritual fire sacrifice, the giver of life. His wife is Invocation-at-Offering, Svaha.

The tantras are each a presentation of the powers available through a specific deity, usually activated through rituals. The number sixty-four, apart from any numerological significance it has, points out the multiplication of siddhis (powers) and their endless trapping possibilities. Shakti makes sure that Shiva brings down to the Seeker's consciousness the one all encompassing tantra of Shri Vidya, the tantra of She who permeates the three worlds of waking, dreaming and sleeping – also known as Lalita or Tripura Sundari. Tantra as a general term is knowledge that transcends light and sound, and reveals the unity in seeming opposites. The root meaning of Shri is radiance.

At 27 min in Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"Shri Vidya is highest of all sadhanas, very specialized. And there are three pockets in India where this Vidya grew and was practiced: Bengal, Kerala, and Kashmir. In Bengal god house[?] they developed this Vidya. As you say Brahman -- the highest -- and as you say God -- they said Goddess. They started worshipping Lord in the form of the mother. Through devotion, through leading the emotions, and leading that emotion to the highest peak of ecstasy. There is a way, a method, of doing that."*

At 1hr 6min he says: *"So that which is the controller of time, space and causation, all these activities of the universe, I'm talking of that Mother Divine who dwells in you. It's very difficult, very very difficult for a teacher to make the student aware that God dwells in you, is not away from you. Don't say God come down. Say God come out. Our prayer changes completely changes when you say God is in me, the ultimate truth is in me, the absolute reality is in me. Which part of me? Mortal, semi-immortal or totally immortal part? This Vidya will lead you gently, lovingly to that."*



**Kamala Mela, Nepal 1983**

**V.32**
**She who is mother of us all,**
**The seed letter “ka” of my lord Shiva,**
**The seed letter “e” of goddess Shakti,**
**The seed letter “ee” of the god of love (Kama),**
**The seed letter “la” of earth,**
**(hrim)**
**The seed letter “ha” of the sun god (Ravi),**
**The seed letter “sa” of the moon with cool rays,**
**The seed letter “ka” of again the god of love,**
**The seed letter “ha” of the sky (Hamsa),**
**The seed letter “la” of Indra, the king of devas,**
**(hrim)**
**The seed letter “sa” of Para (all-pervading power),**
**The seed letter “ka” of the God of love (Kama as Mara, “the Killer”),,**
**The seed letter “la” of the Lord Vishnu (Hari),**
**(hrim)**
**Along with Your seed letters “Hrim”,**
**Which joins at the end of each of the three holy wheels,**
**Become the holy word to worship You.**

This mantra is the core mantra of Shri Vidya, and is often used in conjunction with the Shri Yantra, used to take the Seeker from the concrete world into the bindu at the center, then back out. The key syllable *hrim* is literally the heart of the mantra: the Self. It has fifteen bija sounds, and a silent syllable that used to be secret (only taught to initiated students), and comes at the end: *Srim*. The mantra has many names: Shri Vidya Mantra; *Sodhasi*, the Girl of Sixteen; and others. The mantra may be useful as a preliminary practice, but until it goes to silence, remains an obstacle.

Mantra can be done with vocalization and a mala: that is the gross form, using body, breath and mind. It can be done in the mind only with mala: that is more subtle, but it still operates in the conscious mind, and operating a mala engages the senses. When the mala is dropped, the mantra is able to quiet the conscious mind so that the dreaming mind can be accessed – that is more subtle. When the mantra falls into silence, the state of deep sleep is accessed, most subtle – no body, no breath, complete darkness. Then there is the possibility to go beyond mind.

You can see an animation of the contemplation using Shri Yantra at
http://www.swamij.com/videos/bindu-sequence.wmv

26 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *“Now I am telling you how to use it [mantra]. In all these dikshas mantra is always given. What is mantra? You are confused by that. A word, sound, a set of sounds or words which are not made by human beings. Which are heard by the sages in deep meditation.”*

1hr 3min into Lecture 1: *“In music there are two sorts of music. A time comes when the musician is lost in his wisdom and then he starts whispering. Finest of music is that moment when musician starts whispering. When teacher whispers a mantra -- that’s great. But when you start hearing whispers from within, as Mother whispers to the child,*

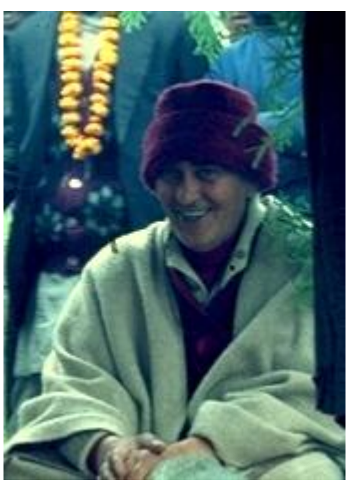
*it's not a language, it's beyond all the languages, the language in which a newborn baby speaks to her mother. What is that language? It's not English, it's not Sanskrit, it's not Pali, it's not any language. Those noises and sounds are full of love, the language of love. That language of love comes through heart but it's not from the heart, it's from the soul. Deep down the soul, the way mother whispers and that language is understood by the child but if you speak any [language with grammar] the child won't stop crying. You are close to that teacher and a language develops. That language is silence, and it is considered that through silence the best of the teachings are imparted -- through silence. In silence. When you don't have to speak. You don't have to speak."*



**V.33**
**Smara, Yoni, Lakshmi:**
**Some place these three deities at the beginning of Your mantra,**
**(You Who are boundless intense bliss)**
**and mutter the mantra to You, using rosaries of wishing jewels as beads,**
**while making offerings in Shiva's fire with hundreds of oblations consisting of streams of ghee from Surabhi (the heavenly wish cow).**

This is a slightly different version of the Shri Vidya mantra in the previous verse. Smara = Kama (Eros) -- *Klim*, Yoni = Source -- *Hrim*, Lakshmi = spiritual wealth -- *Srim*. The mantra is externally vocalized, a malla is used, and ghee is offered to the fire. That is the way of Kaula Tantra. In Samaya Tantra as taught by Swami Rama, all offerings are made internally.

Swami Rama says in Lecture 1, about 1hr 5min.: *"So that which is the controller of time, space and causation, all these activities of the universe, I'm talking of that mother divine who dwells in you. It's very difficult, very very difficult for a teacher to make the student aware that God dwells in you, is not away from you. Don't say God come down. Say God come out. Our prayer changes completely changes when you say God is in me, the ultimate truth is in me, the absolute reality is in me. Which part of me? Mortal, semi-immortal or totally immortal part? [waking, dreaming, sleeping –JD] This Vidya will lead you gently, lovingly to that. And there are three schools. One school [kaula] believes in worshipping at the root, Muladhara chakra. It is totally external. Another [Mishra] is done here [heart] in anahata chakra. But the Samaya which I am going to explain to you even the scriptures do not understand. Occasionally they translate Samaya as I am with you, constantly with you. This is the aim of Samaya marg. When you are constantly aware of the lord you have accomplished something. So your body is chakra. You have to learn to go at that point where Shiva and Shakti are one, where there is no distinction of male and female concept, soul has no gender. God has no gender. You cannot say God is man. Man has written books so man calls him, him, him. Woman says she, she, she. But it is beyond all these genders."*



**Swami Rama, Hansda Ashram Nepal 1984**

**V.34**
**You are the body of Shiva, having sun and moon for breasts,**
**And His body is Your body,**
**By mutual complementarity, bonded in universal reciprocity,**
**Expressed by transcendent bliss.**

Shiva and Shakti are one. Sun and Moon refer to Ida and Pingala, which when balanced open the central Sushumna channel, where there is no (horizontal) distinction, only vertical. In many of the other verses, Shakti has been given a more important position than Shiva, but in this one there is no distinction at the highest level. Both vertical and horizontal dissolve. Only bliss remains, beyond time and space.

Swami Rama says, about 38 min. into Lecture 1: *"The day you have attained this faith that Lord is in me, I am the shrine of the great Lord, you have accomplished something. And teacher again and again says… you put a question to your teacher: 'How is possible for a little human being to become temple of god?' Teacher says: 'Look here. God dwells everywhere how can you exclude yourself? Where is that place there is no god? No absolute truth? It is within you. How can you say that this space in the glass is separated from this space and this apace is separated from the space outside, they are one and the same.'*

*"But again and again the teacher makes you aware of this. Now your worship starts, your research starts, your path starts in the world. It is inward journey. From gross to subtle to subtler and then to subtlest aspect of your being. And the more you go inside the more you come in touch with those finer forces, then your whole life is changed. You like to serve others, you like to love others, and it's a great joy for you to help others without any expectation. It becomes your nature. And then whatever your convictions are, they are your firm convictions. And anything goes against your conviction you don't move, you don't say I'm sorry. Christ never said sorry don't crucify me, I want to live. He never said that. You attain that peak, that height of conviction where death has no meaning. People are trying to search for the meaning of life. Understand yourself first. Therefore first part, first awareness that teacher creates is awareness that mother divine is within you."*



**V.35**
**You are mind, You are space, You are wind, You are the fire for whom the wind is charioteer,**
**You are the cosmic waters, You are the earth;**
**For You to devolve into the form of the universe,**
**You take the form of Parvati, the young bride of Shiva, and show Your face as the world of name and form.**

Shiva and Shakti must present the illusion of separation in order to create the universe of name and form. Here this is put in terms of Shiva and Parvati (Shakti as "Daughter of the Mountain"), and the five elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space. For the Seeker, this is a reminder that Divine Mother is in everything. Practice leads to the direct experience of Her, removing the veils of the mind that discolor the truth of direct experience. Grass is green, sky is blue, mountains are mountains.

About 53 min. into Lecture 1*: "How your body is composed? How it was formed? From here you start going inside [Muladhara up chest gesture with two hands] if you have known yourself you know the universe. But if you try to know the universe you are lost in the bewilderment, you are lost outside, so you better learn to understand yourself first. That Vidya which leads you systematically is called Shri Vidya, highest of all vidyas. Ask Mother and you are fully protected."*

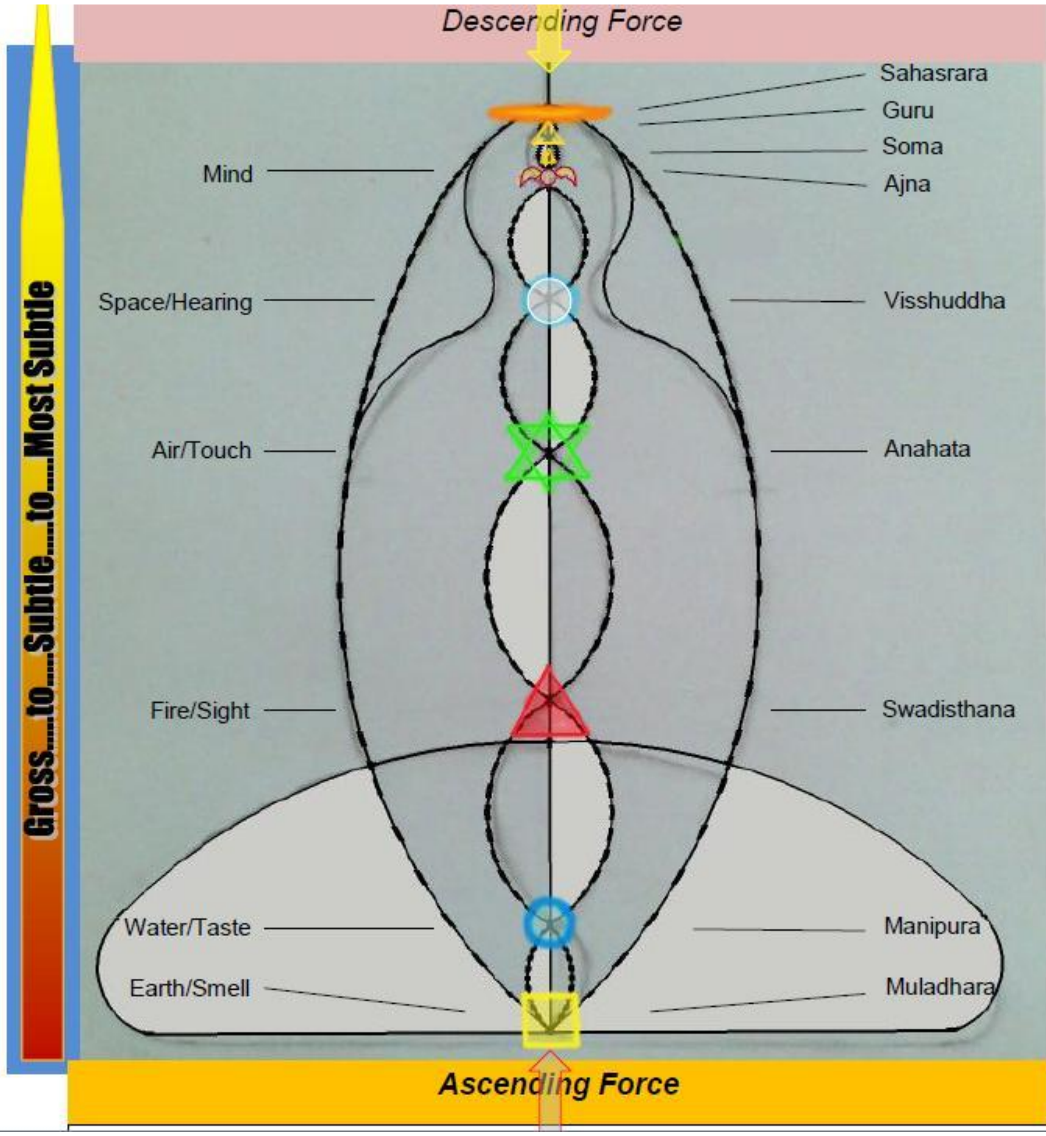
24 min. into Lecture 3: *Question from audience: "What does the mind do in sleep? Does it just run around?" Swami Rama replies: "No. Sleep means when there is no content in the mind, then that is called sleep. When thoughts are not active, they don't go to their chamber [the] conscious mind, they don't use their avenues, their senses during that time you're in deep sleep. The moment there is some content in the mind, that is not sleep, it turns to dreams. And when your mind contacts your senses -- that employee [the waking mind interfaces with the indriyas –JD] -- then it's called waking state. But there is a state beyond waking, dreaming and sleeping that's called Turiya, the state beyond , in which you are on the top of the mountain seeing above, down below, here, there and everywhere. That Turiya state is called kingdom of Beauty, where there lies Mother Divine, Shakti the power of powers."*

When you sit to meditate, first make the body still and comfortable. Exhale from the top of the head to the tip of the tailbone, and inhale back up, without jerks, eliminating the pause and extending the transition between inhale and exhale, exhale and inhale. Establish sushumna, checking the breath at the bridge of the nostrils where it joins the upper lip. Go to the darkness beyond the lights. (There are some other steps that are not included here, but should be taught by a competent teacher).

At 1hr 45min into Lecture 3 of Saundaryalahari, Swami Rama says: *"So I came to one conclusion, and I want to give you one thing, when you start meditating, don't try to see the light. Don't have that "I want to see light. I want to see blue light, purple light, white light, gold light." Don't do that. These lights will come and disappear according to the predominance of tattvas. One day you will see golden lights, one day a blue light, that's not progress; those lights you see you have glimpsed because of tattvas. You have five tattvas elements related to this; fire, when oxygen active you'll see a blue light. Many times a meditator feels fragrance, and that's not untrue, during that time he's one with the Prithvi [Earth] Tattva. Fragrance the quality of the Tattva. Many times a student sees himself floating in the water. Many times he will feel burning sensation because of tattvas. Predominance of tattvas. One of the tattvas remains predominant."*

About 30 min. into Lecture 3*: "Again I repeat: first, you sit down, learn to attain a steady and comfortable posture. First you come across the tremors, because you are trying to discipline your body which was never disciplined. The body will move, one way or the other. It has nothing to do with Kundalini. I have seen many people smoke marijuana, take drugs, and start [rotating head, shaking]. I was asked to speak in a group where everybody was doing like this. I asked the teacher; he said their Kundalini is awakened. I said if they stop I will talk. Everybody stopped. Nowhere in any shastra is it mentioned, and no teacher will ever be foolish enough to teach his student to do this and call it Kundalini awakening. If you sit down, naturally your bottom will get warm. My bottom is warm so I have Kundalini. OK children now joke is over be serious [laughter]."*

In the next six verses, the chakras are described one by one, beginning with Ajna, between the eyebrows and going down to Muladhara, the order in which we arrive into the world of form and name. Some translators have rearranged the verses starting from Muladhara and going up, the order in which Kundalini rises. Until stability is achieved, Kundalini moves part of the way upward in meditation, then recedes again.


Descending Force
Sahasrara
Guru
Soma
Ajna
Mind
Space/Hearing
Visshuddha
Air/Touch
Anahata
Fire/Sight
Swadisthana
Water/Taste
Manipura
Earth/Smell
Muladhara
Ascending Force
Gross.....to.....Subtle.....to.....Most Subtle

**V.36**
**I worship Shiva in Your Ajna chakra, illuminated by the light of ten million suns and moons,**
**Where Shakti as Supreme Consciousness embraces his left side.**
**When He is worshipped with pure devotion beyond sun, moon, and fire,**
**No light enters, yet a flood of radiance arises.**

The verse points out that "worship" of "him" and "her" has to be transcended. Shankara wrote symbolically, because symbols provide a way to understand that which is beyond the mind's ability to grasp. Symbols cannot be exhausted by mere words. When we worship, we are in a posture of awe towards that which is non-dual, beyond name and form, so beyond the mind -- the Eternal or Absolute that shines through the relative. At the point between the eyebrows, Shiva and Shakti are united, but still perceived as dual, symbolized as the image of Ardhanarishvara, half Shiva and half Shakti (Shakti is the left side). The Seeker meditating on this point, when sufficiently purified and prepared, can go beyond the six chakras to pure radiance, beyond time, space and causation which are symbolized as fire, sun and moon -- these also represent the three parts of the fifteen-syllable Shri Vidya mantra. The Seeker is able to sit in complete darkness -- where there is no worship, no "him", no "her". Then the light arises from within.

As Swami Rama says in Saundaryalahari Lecture 1, about 01:40: "*It's not the worship of a woman, mother, it's not worship of man, father. It's the worship of Brahman. Not even worship of neuter gender. [It is worship of] the absolute truth which is changeless. Which is not subject to change, death and decay. That which is limitless; that infinite for which we do not have words, which is beyond explication. Which cannot be explained, which is inexplicable. (You see). But the method here is [undecipherable] your body is a shrine."*

In the core of Shri Vidya practice as given by Swami Rama in his *Saundaryalahari* video series, near the end of Lecture 4, the Seeker is one-pointed in Ajna, making his/her abode in complete darkness (not exterior darkness, but the darkness of the withdrawal of the jnanendriya of sight). When attention can be kept there, light will come through from the eternal light of Sahasrara.

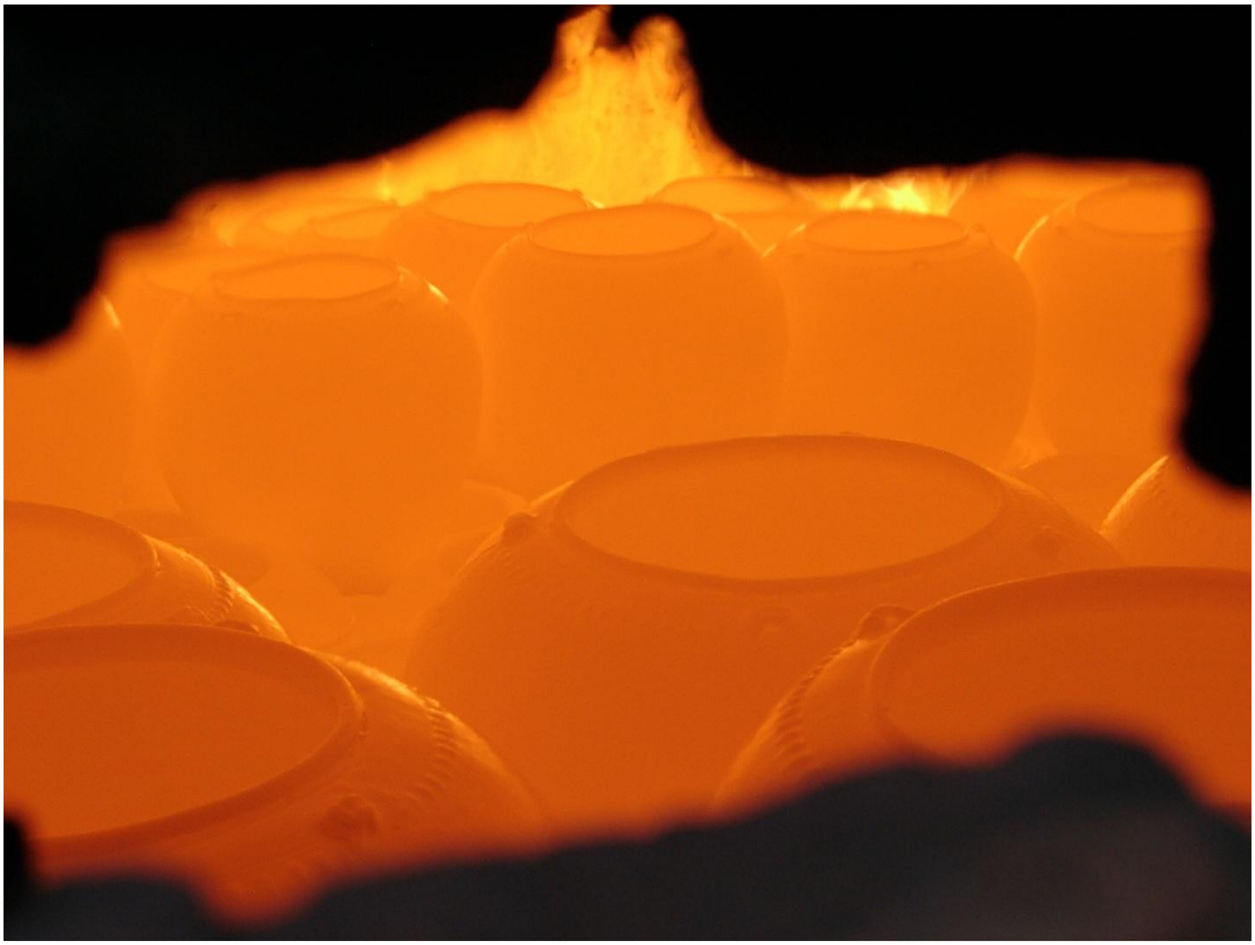
At approximately 01:50:00, Swami Rama says: *"It's very easy to experience and imagine light, but it's difficult to observe darkness and maintain that darkness for some time, I'll tell you that. The student is asked to observe darkness, complete darkness. Why? So that you can see real light far and far away. [points far away] the teacher gives him initiation on the Ajna chakra bhedana, meditating on the Ajna chakra, and he says in the Ajna chakra, completely dark oval type [draws linga inside Ajna circle] on this figure you meditate. Don't go towards the words and aksharas [syllables]. Otherwise you'll be lost singing …. Whole day….. what you'll find you will find the light coming through."*

*Danielou presents a vivid description of this darkness (Hindu Polytheism, p.269):*

*"…The state of deep sleep bears some resemblance to the absolute quiescence which spreads everywhere when the universe dissolves and all beings and forms enter into eternal sleep in the lap of the boundless night.*

*"Deep sleep is for us an image of the total peace that follows the dissolution of the universe, of the stage where nothing remains but the transcendent power of Time, Maha-Kali, the absolute night.*

*“The approaching night, in her display, spreads over the twilight, which is but the reflected remnant of an apparent consciousness, itself but the veiling-power of ignorance, of unconsciousness.  It seems to us impossible that night may ever entirely drive away twilight, as well as all remnants of thought or perception,* ***but the absolute night is the ultimate form of consciousness, and when perception of all appearances vanishes, she appears supremely resplendent****.  By comparison with Her, twilights and dawn are but obscurity….”*



**Pottery firing, Kyauk Myaung, Myanmar**

**V.37**
**In the throat chakra named Vishuddha,**
**Where Shiva is clear as flawless crystal -- origin of space,**
**I worship Shiva and Shakti as equals;**
**Their united lights illuminate the world,**
**And dispel inner darkness, like the moonlight-guzzling Chakora bird.**

Vishuddha has the meaning of crystal clear; this chakra is the location of the element space, and carries the symbol of the full moon. Moon and Sun are separate, but their light comes from the same source. Without sun, the moon is invisible. Without moon, the sun is unseen. The world of name and form is illuminated by the light of duality, moonlight is the reflection of the sun. In the descent from Ajna to Vishuddha, as the world is created, one more veil has been added to obscure Atman from consciousness. (Remember the verses go down the chakras, from subtlemost to gross levels of manifestation – the process by which we become embodied, the process by which Shakti descends to sleep in Muladhara – seemingly separated from Shiva as a metaphor for our ignorance) Illumination at this level is partial, since it is limited by moon, sun and fire. Meditators often are attracted and distracted by these lights.

In Lecture 1 at 1hr 44min, Swami Rama says: *"Meditators immediately want to see a light. You have a light; why are you worried? Convince yourself that you have light, and I need not convince you. How can you see light if you don't have light? How do you see light of sun, moon, and stars if you don't have light? You have light of knowledge, you have light of brilliance, you have light of decisiveness, you have light of discrimination. Your light is definitely superior than all these dumb lights [pointing at auditorium lights]. With the little switch "off," there will be darkness. From where that light comes? It doesn't come from eyes—it comes through eyes. Very little comes through eyes. Most of it does not come through eyes. Most of it remains inside. ….*

*"So I came to one conclusion, and I want to give you one simple thing. When you start meditating, don't try to see the light. You see easily the light; what type of meditation it is that you are in search of what light? So don't have that, "I want to see light; I want to see blue light, purple light, white light, gold light." Don't! These lights will come and disappear according to the predominance of tattvas. One day you'll see golden light; one day you'll see one light; another day you'll see another light. That's not progress."*

Tattvas are the basic building elements that describe the universe, beginning with earth, water, fire, air, space. According to different philosophies, there are up to 36 tattvas.



**Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar. 90m. (320ft.) high, the pagoda is periodically covered with a bamboo scaffolding in order to renew the gold leaf covering.**

**V.38**
**Enjoying the honey of wisdom**
**From the open lotus of consciousness (Anahata),**
**I worship that pair of hamsas as they glide over the higher mind,**
**(as swans move on Lake Manasarovar);**
**From their loving talk arise the eighteen arts;**
**They separate the useful from the non-useful, like separating milk from water.**

The Anahata, located at the heart center, is the juncture of the higher and lower chakras. As such, it represents the point where lower consciousness is purified by meeting the light of higher consciousness. Shiva and Shakti are embodied as hamsas, mythological swans or geese, who meet here (relatively, since they never were separate), and begin their dance, leading the Seeker out of his animal nature. Anahata also represents the union of the vertical with the horizontal, symbolized in the Christian crucifix. Hamsas at physical Lake Manasarovar are probably the Brahmani ducks that live at Lake Manasarovar near Mt. Kailash in Tibet. They live on Manasarovar in the summer, and winter in north India on the Ganga, so would have been observed closely by yogis in both locations. They mate for life, and stay together day and night, calling back and forth. The eighteen arts refer to the classic disciplines, including the four Vedas, rules for reciting prayers, grammar, astronomy, military science, drama and dance, etc.

Mythologically, swans are able to separate milk from water, so are symbols for the power of discrimination, which becomes available when we are no longer bound by the lower desires, allowing us to progress spiritually. However, Anahata is also related to grasping and holding, or attachment, which needs to be overcome in order to get beyond all these words.

Swami Rama says 20min into Lecture 4: *"Is Divine Mother related to the Lord Within? They are one and the same. There are two aspects of the lord: one is silent aspect or mental aspect, another is expressive aspect. That creative aspect is called Mother, that silent aspect is called Father… of the Universe. One is called Shiva, another is called Shakti. Without Shakti, nothing can be created. This universe was directly created by Shakti. You see… ..source is Shiva, but Shiva without Shakti's help cannot create the universe. One is unmanifested power, another is manifestation. That which manifests is called Shakti, that which remains in unmanifested form though it is still there is called self-existent power – that is Shiva – and which manifests itself that's called Shakti. Fine discrimination is there."*

At 1hr 4min into Lecture 1: *"When teacher whispers a mantra that's great. But when you start hearing whispers from within, as Mother whispers to the child, It's not a language, it's beyond all the languages, the language in which a newborn baby speaks to her mother. What is that language? It's not English, it's not Sanskrit, it's not Pali, it's not any language. Those noises and sounds are full of love, the language of love. That language of love comes through heart but it's not from the heart, it's from the soul. Deep down [from] the soul, the way mother whispers, and that language is understood by the child; but if you speak any [language with grammar] the child won't stop crying. You are close to that teacher and a language develops. That language is silence, and it is considered that through silence the best of the teachings are imparted through silence. In silence. When you don't have to speak. You don't have to speak."*



**Swan carving, Thailand**

**V.39**
**The persistent fire in Your Swadisthana is the great Fire—**
**Consuming your power to energize, O Mother,**
**And out of it the power of Shakti called Complementary.**
**When His fierce angry gaze is burning up the three worlds,**
**Your glance, moist with compassion, is a cooling antidote.**

Note that as before, Shankara puts Swadisthana (Her own abode) in what is normally the place of Manipura, but is now associated with Fire as bhuta agni. Fire associated with Shiva, when controlled, is very useful; when uncontrolled, very destructive. Shakti complements Fire with moisture, maintaining a balance of the two energies, or quenching the fire and recreating the universe at every moment. The Seeker, first balancing Ida and Pingala nadis, then balancing the Prana and Apana vayus, using pranayama directs Kundalini upward in Sushumna, the central Nadi, igniting the fire at the navel center.

In Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"Animal mind means that negative part of mind which runs towards the world, and refuses to go to fathom the finer forces of life within you. Rajasic mind and animal mind -- animal mind is actually burnt here, [Manipura], as gold is burnt in the fire. And then ornaments are made. Animal mind is burnt here. Then comes that purified mind, disciplined in Anahata, becomes human mind."*

At 1hr 18min in Lecture 3 of Saundaryalahari, Swami Rama says: *"The questions will be answered. The hurdles will be removed -- for those who are practicing. That [heart] center is considered to be center of emotions. Those who find themselves emotionally predominate, for them it's better to start at [Anahata]. But there is another point. Why did I include Manipura chakra in it? Because Manipura chakra is biggest of all, it controls the solar system…"*

*"It's called solar science. So those who are teachers, before they teach Kaula and then they teach Mishra, they first teach their students something about this solar power through Manipura chakra. Concentrating on this chakra, which is situated at the navel, a triangular form that indicates fire, the flames of the fire go higher upwards. So making their mind one-pointed, they do it. In a few days time, heat starts being felt by you, you start perspiring, and it becomes easy to notice that you have accomplished something. Two things are noticed in your character: appetite is increased, excess appetite, you can eat up to 40 plates a day."*

At 1hr 6min into Lecture 2, Swami Rama says*: "So after attaining a steady and comfortable posture, unique….then you learn one practice, very good practice. Stay awake and practice it, this is compared with the physical exercise, finest of all exercises in yoga, which is Agni Sara. If it is done correctly, it's a unique exercise. A man of 80 or 100 will have energy like a man of 30 years old. This is a wonderful thing, provided you do Agni Sara, a powerful vigorous exercise that activates the solar system."*

Swami Rama placed great emphasis on Agni Sara, which when done correctly stimulates the fire element on the gross body level (Jathara Agni) as well as the subtle level (Bhuta Agni). When the third chakra is energized by Agni Sara and Kundalini is moved -- using pranayama -- from Muladhara (earth) through Manipura (water) to Swadisthana (Fire), the energy of fire automatically takes Her to the fourth chakra (Anahata).

In the daily practice sequence, asana is followed by pranayama: Agni Sara, Kapalabati, and Bhastrika. Sitting in Siddhasana (or other asana that is steady and comfortable), the Seeker engages Aswini Mudra five to ten repetitions, engaging on exhale, disengaging on inhale. Then

engages Mulabandha, gradually letting it relax until only the subtle consciousness of it remains. Concentration goes from body to breath to mind, into meditation.

Besides increasing appetite, Agni Sara also increases sexual energy, which is channeled to Kundalini.  This energy can also be misused externally.  Agni Sara must be learned from a competent teacher who has direct experience of the subtle levels of the practice, since there are many versions of something called Agni Sara that have very different purposes and energetics. Subtle Agni Sara is done with the mind in order to go beyond the mind.



**Burning trash left by pilgrims at Mt. Kailash**

**V.40**
**In Manipura, Shakti flashes lightning from Shiva's dark cloud,**
**Together they create a rainbow of sparkling jewels,**
**And blessed showers fall on the three worlds,**
**That were scorched by the full sunlight of Shiva.**

In the second chakra, related to water (Shankara has switched the names of Manipura and Swadisthana, but not the bhutas), the Seeker has to transcend baser sexual urges, and transform that power to the spiritual level. The verses imply a strong sexual duality, with a powerful image of the tension that builds in a thunderstorm, finally releasing its energy in rain and rainbows to cool the parched earth. The three worlds are Waking, Dreaming, Sleeping; or Gross, Subtle and Causal.

Around 50min into Lecture 3 of Saundaryalahari, Swami Rama says: *"Why this Kundalini sleeps here? [Muladhara]. Root chakra. She is supposed to stay in her home that is called Swadisthana chakra, her own abode. Her own abode is not this [Muladhara]. She is sleeping here because she is intoxicated she doesn't know where she is. She is so intoxicated that she has slipped down from her abode and is sleeping here. It is in her latent place. In dormant place. What the yogis do, those who know this yogic anatomy, those who understand, they do it. After all she is Mother Divine whether she is sleeping -- she has created now she is resting. But she is not at her home. Swadisthana chakra. She is supposed to be in her home."*

*In Lecture 3, 30min., he says: "Again I repeat first, you sit down, learn to attain a steady and comfortable posture. First you come across the tremors, because you are trying to discipline your body which was never disciplined. The body will move, one way or the other. It has nothing to do with Kundalini. I have seen many people smoke marijuana, take drugs, and start [rotating head, shaking]. I was asked to speak in a group where everybody was doing like this. I asked the teacher he said their Kundalini is awakened. I said if they stop I will talk. Everybody stopped. Nowhere in any sastra [scripture] is it mentioned, and no teacher will ever be foolish enough to teach his student to do this and call it Kundalini awakening. If you sit down, naturally your bottom will get warm. My bottom is warm so I have Kundalini. Ok children now joke is over, be serious. [laughter]"31:12*

The Seeker continues the descent from Sahasrara to Muladhara Chakra, but now consciously, following the process of devolution from Not-One into the world of time/space, name, form, number, etc. Having directly experienced Her light, the world is revealed just as it is—She shines through all the senses, and also illuminates the samskaras that still need purification. The work of removing veils is not over, but now She is present to gently assist. Bhuta Shuddhi is a helpful preparation to clarify the chakras for upward traveling, and the return journey. It is considered to be an advanced practice, and should be learned from a competent teacher.



Shallow Bowl with Lightning 2003.  Porcelain, celadon glaze 22in. dia.

V.41
I meditate in Your earthy wheel of Muladhara,
Goddess who loves to dance with Your Lord, perfect dance steps
Expressing the nine elemental links.
This world has you both as parents.
You wed one another,
and dance this world into rebirth.

This is the last verse of “Anandalahari”, Wave of Bliss. The remaining 59 verses are “Saundaryalahari”, Wave of Beauty, which poetically praise aspects of Divine Mother. “Anandalahari” presents the practice taught by Swami Rama in his videos, that leads the Seeker to the bindu, and beyond to the center of consciousness from which all arises. To know Her once is to know Her irreversably. The descent from Sahasrara to Muladhara is done consciously; there is still work to be done, still veils to be removed, but now the light is known.

The Seeker begins his meditation in Muladhara, concentrating prana to wake Kundalini, starting her on her upward journey to meet Shiva. The journey through nine levels of chakras corresponds with the nine triangles that are the basis of Shri Yantra, which also has nine circuits from the bindu out. There are nine holes in the human body, said to be nine possible exits at the time of death. Muladhara, as root, is where we are attached to the Earth element, and where Kundalini Shakti is imaged as three and a half coils (representing Waking, Dreaming, Sleeping and Turiya).

In Lecture 3, about 53 min.: *“Because you need to condense the inner heat, use the flow of energy which is all over the body. Scattered. By going to powerhouse first, and that powerhouse looks like this. [draws three-and-a-half spirals]. It’s based at the root of your spinal column. 53:09. In the powerhouse that energy which is called Kundalini is like this [shows spirals]. Coiled. Now the yoga science says there is a flow of nectar from this part of the body [points to upper head]. She drinks that flow of nectar and remains intoxicated. It’s not the wine you find in the market, or liquor, its intoxication is heavier than that. Even japa intoxication is very heavy.*”

*“Why this Kundalini sleeps here? [Muladhara]. Root chakra. She is supposed to stay in her home that is called Swadisthana chakra, her own abode. Her own abode is not this [Muladhara]. She is sleeping here because She is intoxicated She doesn’t know where She is. She is so intoxicated that She has slipped down from her abode and is sleeping here…. After all She is Mother Divine whether She is sleeping -- She has created now She is resting. But She is not at her home. Swadisthana chakra. She is supposed to be in her home. So what the yogis do, awaken her. What they hear during the time? Hissing sound. Ssshhh!. Which was later on compared by swamis with the hiss of the snake. Coiled like snake [draws]. It’s coiled like a snake, you know. They uncoil this force and lead this force which resides inside your centralis canalis—Brahmanadi, Saraswatinadi—the finest tube, channel, in you, and to the highest abode where her Beloved resides. [draws Sahasrara]. This is easily accompliShed by the yogis, by the devotees of Shri Vidya. She is also called Tripurasundari. Pura means city. Tri means three. But She dwells on the fourth, waking, dreaming, and sleeping, these are the three cities. And fourth is called Turiya. Fourth state. All that you can do, that you are able to do, you are functioning consciously during waking state is also her power, when you dream it is also her power, and what is that power that gives you complete rest that leads you to sleep? That is her power. But actually it is here, called sleepless sleep. Mandukya Upanishad discusses this.”*

In Lecture 3, 1hr 5min, Swami Rama says: *"There are many gates but the highest gate is here [top of head]. Many yogis drop their body through that gate. Anybody who goes through that gate knows where he is going. You'll find one of the nine holes becomes distorted when somebody dies. Eyes become like this [rolls eyes up], tongue becomes like this [sticks tongue out]. Something becomes distorted. It means the prana departs through that. Yogis say no. We will drop our body because body is subject to change, death and decay. Body is not immortal. So we'll drop this body through this gate [Sahasrara]. Why through any other gate?"*

At the end of Lecture 4, he concludes, practical as always: *"As your physical body needs nutritious food, cleansing habits, exercises and not doing things beyond your capacity, your breath needs to be serene, not shallow, your mind needs to be purified. [When] your mind is purified, then such a purified mind is no more obstacle, then you can go beyond, to the fourth step. God bless you. Peace, peace, peace.*" [end lecture 4]

**"Although I met you only yesterday, you are a part of me that I have known forever. In you I see me closer to the self I love. And though I see you not again, I need not say goodbye to who I am. For looking now, in truth I see, I live in you and you in me." --from Love's Legacy, 1980, by Don Walker.**



**Shri Yantra**

***HERE BEGINS THE SAUNDARYALAHARI***

From here to the end, these verses describe Mother Divine from head to foot, or up and down the Sushumna. Having set the stage and described the practice in the preceding verses, Shankara now is free to express his ecstasy, basking in the lap of the Goddess, living in the world yet having the highest perspective. She shines through all perceptions. These verses are used by the Seeker as a series of contemplations.



# Here Begins

# The Saundaryalahari

**An Interpretation by Jim Danisch**

Verses 42 – 70 (2nd edition May 2011)

**Verses 42 -- 100** describe Mother Divine / Shakti / Tripura Sundari from head to foot, or up and down the Sushumna. Tripura Sundari is the beautiful one of the three cities – the three states of consciousness, the “A”, “U”, “M” of Aum (or Om). She is the energy that emerges from the silence beyond Aum, symbolized as the bindu at the center of Shri Yantra. The yantra describes the levels of the world of name and form. The goal of the practice is to attain the center of consciousness beyond mind, to go through the bindu.

The preceding forty-one verses set the stage and describe the practice, leading the Seeker up Sushumna to the bindu and beyond, then back down to earth, but keeping the realization. Shankara now is free to express his ecstasy, basking in the lap of the Goddess. When Self-realization is attained, with the “perspective” of Turiya, the world of name and form reveals itself as Her. She is in every name and form. The world is seen as it is, undistorted by the waves of the mind and senses.

Most of us have had the experience of Not-One, perhaps as children, perhaps spontaneously, perhaps through drugs, perhaps with the help of a teacher. So those samskaras are with us, and the tendency is to want to repeat the experience. That wanting of repetition is an obstacle in itself. In duality there is still work to be done. Personality is still there, samskaras are still there, although easier to recognize for what they are. The mind is still active, thinking, thinking, thinking; checking, checking, checking. Whatever you think you know is not it. Stillness and silence only know “exactly as it is”.

The verses are written in Sanskrit court poetry. I don’t know Sanskrit, but even in the English translations I have used, the multi-leveled symbolism and word images come through. Everything in this world – every object, every word, every space – is a symbol that leads back to the origin of this world. Symbols like “Stop” signs have a single, unambiguous meaning. Universal symbols, like the Shri Yantra, contain worlds of meaning and cannot be exhausted by words. Words themselves are symbols, and often have multiple references. As with the first forty-one verses, I have interpreted each verse to the best of my capacity.

I’ve correlated each verse to something that Swami Rama says in his Saundaryalahari video lectures (available on Youtube). I usually found more than one possibility, then picked the one that came forward at that time. The only time Swami Rama refers to Shankara’s poetry is when he briefly sings the first line or so of the first verse. His lectures are very simple, without much cultural coloring, and are aimed at those who want to practice. He finds at the core of Saundaryalahari, the “shortest cut” to direct

realization of the center of consciousness. The lectures are not for those who want to chant the verses or do external puja or worship images. They are for those who want to sit with head, neck and trunk erect, comfortable and steady, breathe – eliminating the pause and extending the transition, dialogue with the mind, then go beyond the mind.

I have been an artist, particularly in the ceramic medium, for most of my life. In going through the verses over the last two years, I have picked out pieces that seem to resonate with the spirit and meaning of the verse. All my work has bubbled up from the latent unconscious, taken on color in the active unconscious and manifested in the conscious world (deep sleep > dreaming > waking mind). Its origin is, of course, with Her, beyond the mind.

*All art and photos by Jim Danisch*



Merging 2004. Stoneware 5ft.



Portrait 2004. Stoneware 8ft.
Coll. Dick and Ester Cogswell

**V.42**
**Daughter of the Snowy Peaks,**
**Twelve signs of the Zodiac make up Your golden crown,**
**When contemplated, they join together as Indra's rainbow,**
**Which condenses to glowing ruby red, Your own color,**
**The reflected glory of the God with the crescent moon in His hair.**

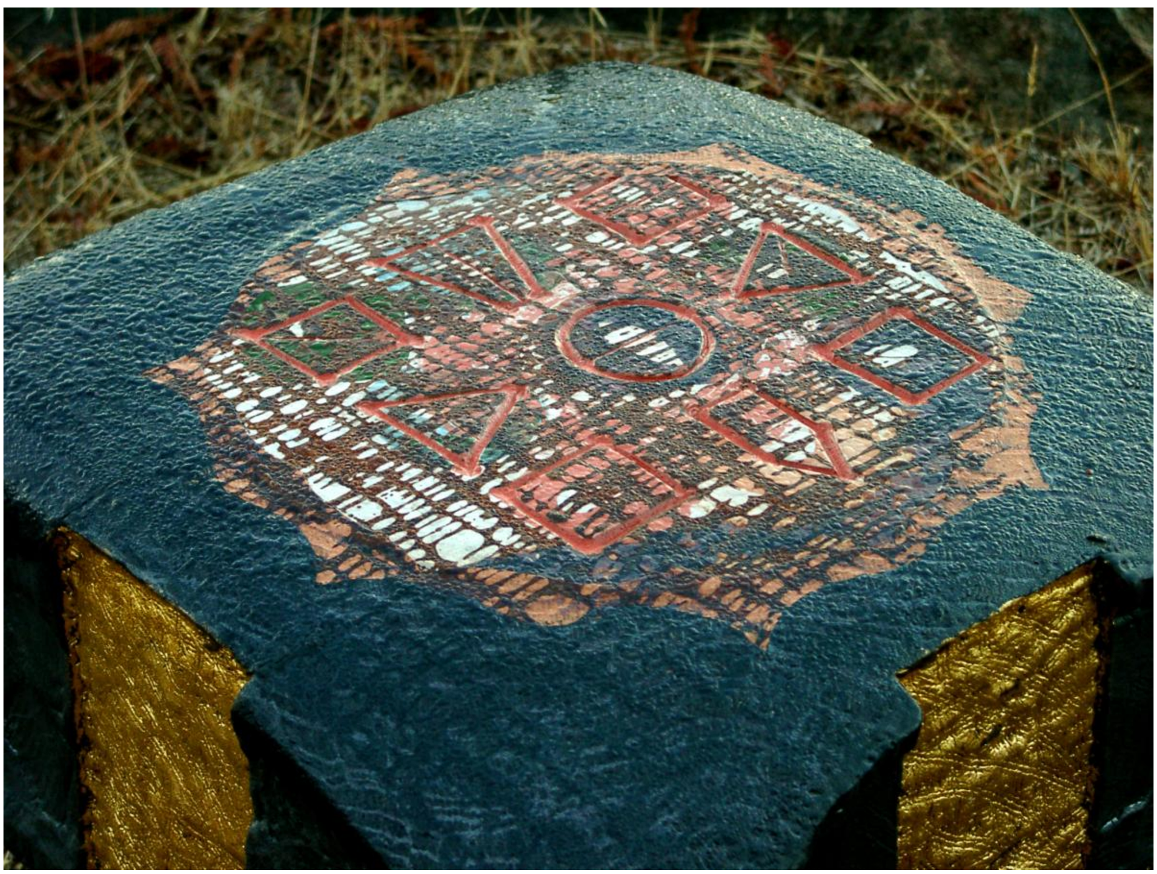
The snowy peaks, as before represent the mountain range of the spine. She has the twelve stellar constellations in rainbow shape crowning her head. Shiva is often portrayed with the crescent moon in his hair, which also is the Sanskrit symbol for the silent nasal syllable at the end of Aum, or Turiya. The rainbow is the reflected light of Shiva, in his solar aspect as Indra. The power of Shakti condenses all colors to glowing ruby red, reflecting Shiva's light. All that we perceive is Shakti, Mother Divine, with Shiva shining through.

In Lecture 3, 47min., Swami Rama says: *"Now I was talking to you about the pranic force. About the mother divine in you. Who has created this structure, who has given you beauty, who has given you all that you have. That mother is there in you, that's direct Shakti. Sun without its light is not sun. Sun is different from the light, but sun cannot exist without light, therefore the atman cannot live without atman Shakti. If there's no Atma Shakti, there's no Atman. If there's no light, there's no sun, sun is different from its light and they're both the same. So it is with Mother Divine and Shiva, the ultimate reality which is not subject to change. It has no gender. It's not she. It's not he. It's not child. It's not old. Though it has no name, no form, yet you use a name and form to go beyond the name and form."*

**V.43**
**Consort of Shiva, let the glory of Your hair**
**absorb the darkness of our mind,**
**Hair like a forest of blue blooming lotuses,**
**thick, glossy and lustrous,**
**Whose primal fragrance surpasses that**
**of Indra's heavenly flower garden.**

The Seeker contemplates that the Goddess's hair reflects the blue color of Shiva, and all other fragrances must take second place to it. Hair so black that Her light shines from inside it. This world is an illusion, but She permeates every aspect of it when we are able to remove the veils that conceal Her.

Swami Rama, 30min into Lecture 1: *"Complete transformation. You cannot smell from your ears, no matter how much you are enlightened, but you are transformed from within. Your thinking is different, your knowing is different, your whole life concept changes."*



Cushion 2004. Stoneware 30in. X 30in.

**V.44**
**Mother of All, Your hair is parted by**
**the radiance of beauty,**
**Rising above your face.**
**Dividing black from black**
**with a line of crimson light,**
**You are the rising sun on shimmering water.**

In Hindu culture, married women tie back their hair, creating a vertical part which is streaked with crimson powder each day, symbolizing Shakti (Crimson red is the traditional color that represents Tripura Sundari). We see Her in the light of the rising sun, and everywhere else.

About 1hr into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"How do you attain understanding? You need to practice for that. You understand something. You understand the sun shines with such a big light, you understand the moon shines, you understand in the far distance there is water and you are thirsty, but you cannot get there. Practice is needed. And that practice should be concrete, profound. Know what you are doing. Do not do if you do not know what you are doing. It will be a waste of time. It is dangerous. It is uncertain.*"



Cup 2007. Porcelain 4in.

**V.45**
**Your face, framed by tight bright curls (or are they bees drunk on Your lotus face?) --**
**With smile revealing teeth as shiny as white lotus stems,**
**You breathe sweet perfume.**
**The glance of Shiva's bottomless eyes is like honeybees drawn irresistibly to your nectar,**
**but when the God of Love got in the way, he was burned to ashes.**

Bees are a frequent image in Saundaryalahari and other scriptures, as creatures powerfully drawn to flowers, inebriated on nectar, concentrators of nectar into honey. The spiritual seeker aims to develop the concentrating passion of bees, in order to go beyond duality. Shiva is so powerfully drawn to Shakti that his eyes become her hair. Sight connects seer and seen, with the directness of bees drawn to flowers.


At the Top 2000. Stoneware 8ft.

Kama – God of Love -- was sent by the gods to rouse Shiva from his meditation, so that he would rid the world of a super-demon. Not wanting to be distracted from Shakti, Shiva hit him with a beam of fire from His eyes and destroyed him.

At the end of Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"But the yogis say you don't have to go anywhere outside, you have soma inside, they tap Soma chakra, they get that divine intoxication. Whatever they experience here [points at Soma chakra], they get intoxicated and remain in that intoxication all day [spinning his forefinger at his temple], and that's why ordinary people in India -- about such people say 'this man is crazy', but [actually] he's in his meditation all the time. You meet many people which are not understood by others. Because they enjoy their soma intoxication. Soma. What that Soma does is constant awareness and in Soma you are constantly aware you don't think anything -- that intoxication is like that. But this Vidya is not attainable without the help of a competent teacher who has already done this."*

The Seeker is attracted to divine intoxication, but remains conscious that this too is an obstacle.

**V.46**
**Two half moons --**
**Your white glowing brow**
**Is mirrored by the shine of Your hair.**
**Joined together with nectar**
**They are the full moon, overflowing with soma.**

This is another reference to Soma chakra (see V. 45), which is located just above Ajna chakra, and below Jnana (Guru) chakra.  When the two are joined, i.e. when concentration is at Soma chakra, the Seeker is said to stay continuously in ecstasy, fed by the subtle nectar called Soma.  Swami Rama said that Soma was a high-altitude creeper which was prepared as a kind of intoxicating wine; other authorities have named other psychedelic plants.  But what is important for the Seeker is the esoteric meaning in the subtle body:  when Soma chakra is opened, there is no need for external substances – the Seeker is intoxicated by yet another attractive obstacle to enjoy and then go beyond.



Half Moon Nectar platter 2004.  Stoneware, slip, 14in. dia.

**V.47**
**Oh Goddess, as Space-Without-End, You remove fear from all worlds,**
**Your arched eyebrows inspire Kama's flowered bow,**
**And frame your multi-faceted eyes, envy of bees.**
**The bow would be released if its middle were not covered by Your left hand.**

Endless space implies endless time and the collapse of the trap of Maya. The Seeker imagines two halves of a bow, which if complete would shoot an arrow straight to Sahasrara. There is no arrow in the image, and the bow is made ineffectual by the left hand, covering Ajna chakra and representing the last impurity that prevents union (in Asia, the left hand is impure). Yet another word-play on desire, eyes, bees…

13min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"…A constantly present friend within you, I'm going to make you aware of that presence, that friend within you. You need really closeness and that's the third path called Samaya; 'I am with you'. When you have this awareness that the lord is with me, the lord of life is with me, then there will be no fear. Fear of what? It has only two reasons: of losing what you have, and of not gaining what you want."*



**V.48**
**Your right eye is the essence of the Sun, it gives birth to the day;**
**Your left eye is the substance of the Moon, it brings on the night;**
**Your third eye is a golden lotus slightly open,**
**It creates the twilight between day and night.**

The Seeker contemplates the three worlds and the three nadis: solar, lunar and Sushumna. Day = waking, Night = sleeping, twilight = dreaming. Twilight is the connection between Day and Night. Another level of interpretation is Tamas, Rajas and Sattva – the three gunas. Rajas is the connection between Tamas and Sattva. There may also be a reference here to Narasimha, the Man-Lion incarnation of Vishnu. He was sent to slay a demon who could not be killed by day or by night (among other conditions), so he killed him at twilight. "Killing" here means the removal of the obstacle that prevents spiritual growth – any obstacle that keeps us stuck in duality. One of my important teachers used to say: "Don't look inside, don't look outside".

About 1hr into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: "*But this only a vichara understanding. How do you attain understanding? You need to practice for that. You understand something. You understand the sun shines with such a big light, you understand the moon shines, you understand in the far distance there is water and you are thirsty, but you cannot get there. Practice is needed. And that practice should be concrete, profound. Know what you are doing. Do not do if you do not know what you are doing. It will be a waste of time. It is dangerous. It is uncertain.*"

Swami Rama emphasized that meditation cannot occur until the mind is cleared of conscious thoughts and dream images. When sitting for meditation, still the body, still the breath, then take time to examine the thoughts that come up. Offer them to the fire of wisdom in Guru Chakra, at the level of the upper forehead. Then go deep, without disturbance.



Birth of Zoroaster 2004. Stoneware 8ft.

**V.49**
**A glance from Your eyes, Oh Goddess,**
**includes all, both the aware and the unaware,**
**Benefits every one, sheds light every where,**
**Is beyond even the beauty of blue lotus flowers,**
**Is a fountain of mercy,**
**Is sweetness personified,**
**Can save even the ignorant,**
**Is the light of the eight cities,**
**And is called by many names,**
**According to which aspect one sees.**

Eight is the number for the five tattvas of earth, water, fire, air and space, plus the three aspects of mind: manas, buddhi and ahamkara. The aspects of her glance are the many Gods that symbolize the multiplicity of Maya. Even a millisecond of silence reveals Her in fullness. Let the breath become serene and seamless – no gap between inhale and exhale. Disengage the train of thoughts that conceals Her. She lives beyond conception. Whatever you think – that is not it.

Swami Rama, from Video 1, around 14:25: *"So householders should not be lost in the world, forgetting their goal, because goal of the renunciates and monks and goals of householders, common people is one and the same. They are not different. We all need enlightenment. We all need to attain the goal of life. What is that goal of life? You often say God. But when you study scriptures, you finally come to conclusion that doesn't make any sense. You need to attain a state of peace, happiness and bliss. And if you have attained this happiness and bliss, then that is called God. If not, then you are worshipping, adoring a god who is not God."*



**V.50**
**In Your presence, the five senses confuse their functions --**
**Your two ears sip poetry, transforming it into nectar,**
**Your two eyes are pulled toward Your ears,**
**Like two young bees**
**Eager to enjoy the nine essences You are absorbed in,**
**Is Your third eye jealous? No. It glows crimson, beyond the senses.**

Hearing and seeing, sound and light, the two pathways to open the third eye of wisdom, are closely connected in this verse, using the familiar metaphor of bees and flowers. The nine essences refer to the nine levels of Shri Yantra, the nine chakras that the Seeker meditates on, and many other references. The crimson of the third eye refers to the color traditionally associated with Tripura Sundari, which permeates and transcends all nine levels. When we realize her beyond the senses, we enjoy the world of name and form as a dance, perfecting our steps, perfecting the form, but not getting trapped by it. Coming and going is easy, because there is no coming and going.

I often wondered why Swami Rama chose to wear crimson or burgundy robes, and I like to think that it represented Her color. I also wonder how many poems he wrote to her. There must be many more than what are in his book “Love Whispers”.



Whistling Pot 1981. Earthenware 16in.

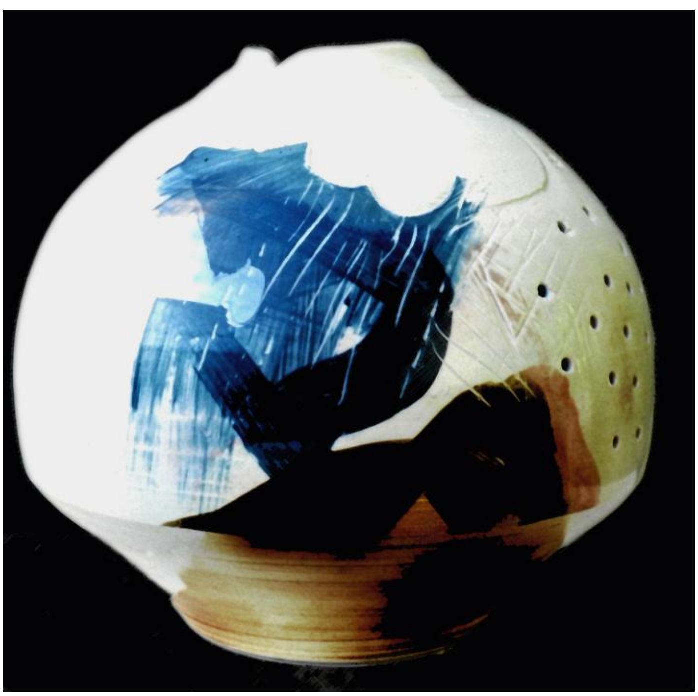
At about 1hr.10min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *“Your meditation does not improve because you do not have the focal point. I am not talking aspect. What is the object of your meditation? Focal point your teacher says.[pointing at ajna] Here the teacher imparts mantra. Now there is a subtle thing here you have to understand [claps hands] this sound is not heard outside. Scientifically this sound can be…a sketch can be made of this sound… aaaah…. [the sound] makes a form. All the forms that we see in the universe are virtually sounds. Sounds have created the universe. Many many sounds. In this way vast ocean there are waves, the waves of beauty, the waves of bliss [waves hands] the waves of wisdom and all the forms have been created by sound, come out of sound, as all the matter has come out of energy.”*

**V.51**
**Mother of all the universes,**
**Your eyes melt with love when they see Shiva.**
**They are indifferent to anyone less,**
**But they are full of the wonder of Shiva's story.**
**Full of jealousy when they see Ganga in his hair,**
**And full of fear when they see the serpents around his neck.**
**Your eyes are the source of lotus-red grace.**
**They smile at Your companions, and they reveal compassion.**

The eye has the capacity both to absorb and to project, to look outside and to look inside. We can see without eyes when we close our eyes. She is neither inside nor outside, but both and neither simultaneously. This may sound like babble or paradox, but when we experience paradox, it is an indicator of the non-dual reality beyond the mind. Just sit with it.

Ganga, the Goddess of the River (Ganges), is a symbol of purity and lives in Shiva's hair; Tripura is both jealous and beyond jealousy. Serpents, symbols of the endless cycles of dissolution and return, inspire fear (At the end of this universe, it all is absorbed into the cosmic serpent Shesha (Remainder), until the next cycle of creation. The Seeker sits, allowing the breath to become smooth and circular, at first "breathing" up and down the spine, putting thoughts into the Guru's fire, going beyond up and down, outside and inside. Silence within, compassion out in the world. All these words exhaust themselves and dissolve.

About 55 minutes into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"But remember you find two forces. One is called ascending force, another is called descending force. What is ascending force? Human effort. What is descending force? Grace of the lord. These two are misinterpreted. Many of us sit down and say lord bless me. He says: "What have you done? You lazy bum. You don't do anything. I am prepared to bless you; come on do something and then I'll bless you." When all your human efforts are exhausted, you don't have any other way of doing anything, you don't find any source to it, suddenly you burst out "lord help me", [then] grace dawns."*



Thunder and Lightning, sound and light, Shiva and Shakti. 1977 16in. porcelain.

**V.52**
**Highest bud of the Mountain King's clan,**
**Your eyes, drawn back almost to Your ears,**
**Look like arrows of Desire, lashes like feathers.**
**He who burned the three cities, object of your aim,**
**Is pricked out of his tranquility.**

The Mountain King is Shiva; She is his counterpart, the noblest. The god Kama symbolizes the principle of desire – the primary desire for divine union that is concealed in all the senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling, smelling, which connect us to the objects of our lower desires. Eyes become arrows, one-pointed. There is a triangle whose base is the right and left eyes, and whose apex is the eye at Ajna Chakra, where the complexity of the external world is concentrated down to the duality of Shiva and Shakti. The two arrows are aimed at one point in Ajna, which opens to the center of consciousness, the union of Shiva and Shakti. By "burning" the three cities of waking, dreaming, and sleeping, -- going beyond the mind in meditation -- Shiva has gone to the fourth state of Turiya -- but without Shakti, he is Shava, an unmotivated corpse. Hitting the target, she wakes him. The illusion that they ever were separate dissolves.

For those who enjoy lots of symbolism: "Nature (*prakriti*), made of the five principles-of-the-elements (*tattvas*), is the vulva into which enters this phallus of light which represents the power of illumination of the Immensity. When it is said that the Lady-of-the-Mountain (Parvati) took the shape of a vulva to catch hold of this phallus, this means that, becoming Nature, namely, becoming the five principles of the elements, she became the support of the world's egg, of the created universe. This is why her symbol is the number 5.

"The vulva, the arrow, and the number 5 are considered equivalent symbols. The word 'arrow' is a symbolic expression for the number 5. It is used for the god of lust, Kama, because of his five arrows (the five senses), for Shiva because of his five faces, and for the Lady of the Mountain because of the five principles of the elements. Although static electricity pervades all the elements, it dwells more particularly in water and in mountain ranges. Since Parvati is the five elements (like a mountain range), the phallus of light enters her. When the mass of static energy falls into her womb, that is, into earth or water, it becomes stabilized. Otherwise it reduces everything to ashes. Thus arises the myth of the Lady of the Mountain becoming a vulva to catch hold of the phallus of fire that was burning the world." – Karapatri, *Lingopasana-rahasya*

About 45min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"When you are in tune, when you have all your desires swallowed by only one desire, the desire to meet Thee in that situation, then someone comes and touches."*

The Seeker, going for simplicity (after all that symbolism), sits in simple union. The silhouette of a person sitting cross-legged is a linga/yoni, no? One glimpse of not-One unlocks the door. It may close again frequently, but the lock is broken and the hinges are oiled.



Kailash, 1999.  Porcelain 6in.

**V.53**
**Three colors shine from your eyes, outlined by sky blue.**
**Red for Brahma, white for Vishnu, black for Shiva,**
**This time without form,**
**as the three gunas:  Rajas, Sattva and Tamas.**

Red, white and black are the three traditional colors that symbolize the gunas, the visual equivalent of the words "Rajas, Sattva and Tamas".  The colors are enhanced by blue, the color of the all encompassing sky.  Our mistake is to confuse the trinity for She who contains it.

The Seeker, having dissolved the anthropomorphic deities, now sees clearly that behind them are the three gunas, which unlike the Gods are primary energies without anthropomorphic attributes, out of which all of Maya is constructed.



Triple Junction Bowl 2004.  Stoneware 14in.d.

About 1hr40min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says:  *"And the center is Ajna chakra here. After you have done this worship, you have organized your emotional body; when emotional body no more disturbs the lake of mind, or life, then we give the next step and that is called Ajna chakra.  [Draws]  You'll see all geometrical figures.  It's easy to keep your mind busy on [square], it's easy to keep your mind within [triangle], it's easy to keep your mind in this figure, but mind refuses to be in a circle.  Does not want to be in a circle.  Does not want to be disciplined.  Human nature is not to be disciplined, Human in human wants to be disciplined, because he has knowledge of the absolute.  At least he can have a glimpse.  You are a compound of three:  animal, human and divine.  Animal does not want to be, so there are Sattva, rajas, tamas [the three gunas].  Tamasa does not want to be disciplined.  The great symbol of tamas in Indian mythology is Ravana.  He had all the powers, what was the difference between Rama's character and his?  He was tamasic, not sattvic.  He was equally a devotee of Shiva, like Rama.  Animal does not want, animal mind does not want to be in the circle.  That's why animal mind is trained here [anahata].  Animal mind means that negative part of mind which runs towards the world, and refuses to go to fathoms of finer forces of life within you.  Rajasic mind and animal mind, animal mind is actually burnt here, [manipura], as gold is burnt in the fire.  And then ornaments are made.  Animal mind is burnt here.  Then comes that purified mind, disciplined in anahata, becomes human mind.  That human mind is led and then given this circle.  This is called Ajna chakra.  'A' means in Sanskrit 'No'.  Means no knowledge."*

**V.54**

**You dissolved your heart in Pashupati, Shepherd of all Sentience.**
**Now grace us who make the inner pilgrimage to the three-fold confluence**
**Of the rivers Saraswati, Ganga, and Yamuna: the golden, the white and the dark.**
**Which Your eyes make one to lead us to the center of consciousness.**

She who lives in the three cities – Tripurasundari – shows us the way to join her by going beyond Tamas, Rajas and Sattva, the three gunas. What remains? The actions of practice help us, paradoxically, to surrender all action. The mind cannot go there.

Symbolically, Shiva has come down from his mountaintop to serve as the Lord of Beasts, teaching us to transcend our animal nature. The earthly confluence is the site of the great twelve year Khumba Mela, where the three gunas are ritually transcended by pilgrims. At Allahabad, there is a confluence of three rivers. Two are physical rivers, but Saraswati is mythical and stands for Sushumna. Ganga is Shakti and Yamuna is Shiva, or lunar and solar nadis. The internal confluence of the trinity is at Ajna Chakra.

Near the end of Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: *"Pause means death. If I exhale and never inhale I'm dead. If I inhale and never exhale I'm dead. Pause means death. If you know how to annihilate pause you're free. You have gone beyond death. These exercises are preliminary exercises, important exercises for going beyond, for creating special culture to your mind, for creating, culturing your mind so that your mind is not this mind, because this mind at present is not capable to go beyond but that mind which is cultivated has potentiality to go deep, to go to deeper levels of your being. A time comes when the boat says you have crossed the river. You go ahead. You don't carry boat with you. So your mind, such a mind, becomes a boat which helps you to go beyond….*

*"That is called sushumna application. The sign and symptom is to have a great joy. You don't find any reason. Your financial position has not increased, you don't have a new girlfriend, you don't have a boyfriend, nothing new, what's the matter? Sometimes you feel the joy is trying to burst. You cannot contain such a joy. You cannot explain. That is a sign of sushumna application. Another clear symptom is both nostrils start flowing freely."*

The Seeker practices eliminating the pause, and extends the transition between inhale/exhale, exhale/inhale. Both nostrils flow freely. To go beyond is to go beyond breath awareness, to surrender the practice itself.



Cup 2007. Porcelain 4in.

**V.55**
**Daughter of the Earth-supporting Lord,**
**When You open and shut Your eyes**
**This world appears and disappears.**
**In the eternal now You never blink.**

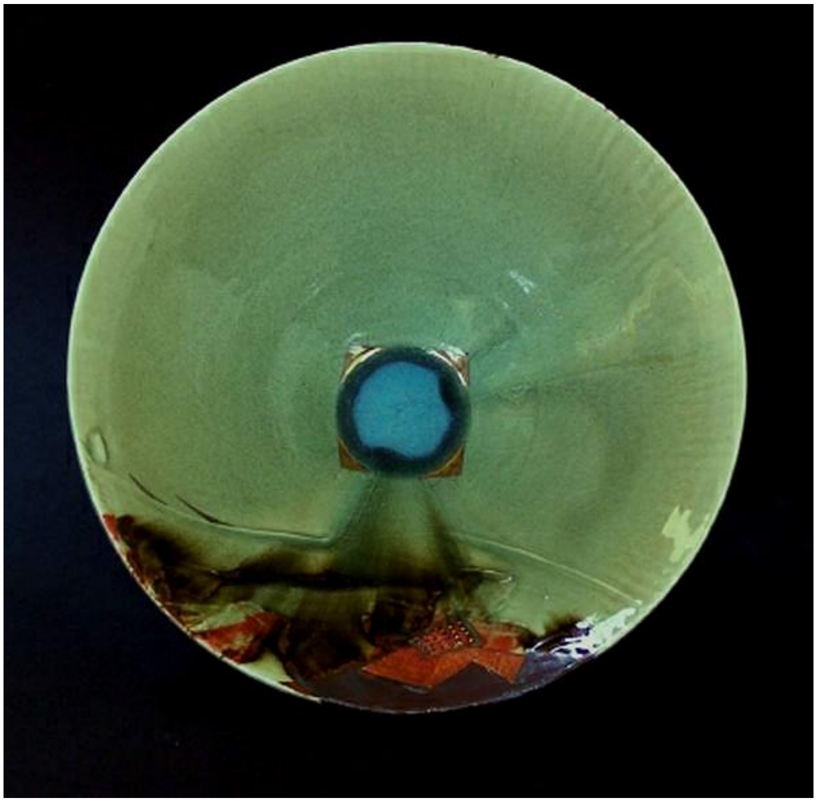
About 1hr23min into Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: *"If there will be no pause, then you have annihilated time. You got Kripa [grace] of Mother. You have done your effort. You have got the Kripa of the Mother Divine. For time, space and causation are directly under her kind control. And nobody can annihilate [her]. Even Rama at after many thousands of years he forgot his time was over. King of death comes to visit and says sir your time is over. Yogi's time is never over, is beyond all these laws. If he had known how to annihilate this pause. Pause means death. If I exhale and never inhale I'm dead. If I inhale and never exhale I'm dead. Pause means death. If you know how to annihilate pause you're free. You have gone beyond death."*

Breathe…eliminate the pause, extend the transition… When the Seeker's eyes are open, the world appears in its waking state; when closed, the world disappears. One-pointed concentration requires that we never mentally "blink", never check ourselves, then meditation can occur, beyond time/space and blinking…Don't look outside, don't look inside.



The Birth of Zoroaster 2004 (detail). Stoneware 8ft.

**V.56**
**Shakti's unblinking eyes carry songs to her ears,**
**Reflecting Her, still fish in the stream observe the flow,**
**eyes always open, even in sleep.**
**The Goddess dwells in a house of blue lotus petals,**
**Shines out in the morning when they close,**
**Shines out in the evening when they open.**



Bowl with pool 2002. Porcelain 14in.

The Seeker must stabilize his concentration in order to float motionless in the stream of thoughts, never mentally blinking. Eliminate the pause, extend the transition -- with the breath and with the mind process. The Goddess in this verse is Lakshmi as Shri -- the goddess of beauty, never hidden. The blue lotus opens at night and closes again at dawn. Beauty shines from the open lotus at night and in the daytime, the lotus is illuminated by sunlight. Seemingly different, the source of the light is the same.

The Seeker remembers that there are two paths to the center of consciousness: the path of sound and the path of light. As you sit in stillness, you will naturally follow sound to silence, via mantra; or follow light to darkness. And beyond…

About 1hr 1min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"Mind often runs to the grooves of the past, and on the basis of the past experiences mind does something and then runs to the future. In this process mind does not know how to be here and now. But as long as you are concentrating on one point [ajna] …what is actually and literally… how do you explain to anybody intellectually what meditation means? If you are a meditator you should have an explanation. A thought comes, a thought comes,… always there is a space between two thoughts. Not to allow this pause is called meditation : only one thought. One thought, persistently one thought is meditation. If you allow one thought to come and then another thought to come and then…. It could be contemplation but it's not meditation. No thought is allowed to come, only one."*

**V.57**
**Your long eye, like a blue lotus slightly opened**
**Bathes even me in its compassion and I become rich,**
**with no loss to You;**
**Your cool moonlight falls equally on forest and palace.**

The Seeker, sensing the power of Shakti, feels graced with her energy to continue sadhana. The emphasis on moonlight, cooling and partly open lotus implies equanimity, without the passionate dualities in the preceding verses. It also implies the expansion of ahamkara (ego) to the truth of "That I am" = "I become rich". The Ishopanishad says: "All this is perfect. All that is perfect. When perfect is taken from perfect, only perfect remains"; there is no loss to Her, because all is included in Her.



One Eye Vase 2002. Porcelain 12in.

Near the beginning of Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"So householders should not be lost in the world, forgetting their goal, because goal of the renunciates and monks and goals of householders, common people is one and the same. They are not different. We all need enlightenment. We all need to attain the goal of life. What is that goal of life? You often say God. But when you study scriptures, you finally come to conclusion that doesn't make any sense. You need to attain a state of peace, happiness and bliss. And if you have attained this happiness and bliss, then that is called God. If not, then you are worshipping, adoring a god who is not God."*

**V.58**
**Daughter of the King of Mountains,**
**You eyebrows curve like Desire's bow**
**Your eyes dart from side to side**
**Firing arrows at your ears.**

The Seeker now shifts his attention from eyes to ears. Meditators naturally gravitate either to sound or light as the medium of the meditation object. A competent teacher will guide the Seeker to one or the other – either a visual object or a sound object. Either path will lead the Seeker to realization. Repetition of mantra, use of prayer beads, is the training phase as well as the trap to be transcended. With regular practice, sooner or later the sound dissolves by itself, and naturally leads to silence.

At 26min into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"What is mantra? You are confused by that. A word, sound, a set of sounds or words which are not made by human beings. Which are heard by the sages in deep meditation."*



The relationship between sound and light. The image is a TV screen, with the Shri Yantra generated by chanting "Aum" into a microphone, through an invention called the tonoscope. See V.58.

**V.59**
**Your two shining cheeks reflect two shining golden earrings,**
**Forming the four wheels of Churner-of-the-Heart's chariot.**
**He drives the Earth, with its wheels of sun and moon,**
**Directed by Shiva, Conqueror-of-Sound-and-Light.**



Dark Wheel 2004. Stoneware 60in.

Shakti as primal cause of desire generates the image of Kama (Churner-of-the-Heart = God of Desire) in a chariot, whose wheels are half "real", half "reflection" – the Goddess is present on both the physical and metaphysical level. Representing Shakti's desire, he leaps onto Shiva's chariot, hoping to wake him. The sun and moon are ida and pingala nadis (left and right subtle channels) on the horizontal axis, prana and apana on the vertical -- Shakti and Shiva, meeting in the Seeker's heart chakra, the juncture of the horizontal and vertical, the center of the cross. The Seeker remembers that Shiva and Shakti are never apart, except in our divided minds, and observes the movement of the mind from the still, silent, motionless center.

About 1hr 3min into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"But when you start hearing whispers from within, as Mother whispers to the child, it's not a language, it's beyond all the languages, the language in which a newborn baby speaks to her mother. What is that language? It's not English, it's not Sanskrit, it's not Pali, it's not any language. Those noises and sounds are full of love, the language of love. That language of love comes through heart but it's not from the heart, it's from the soul. Deep down the soul, the way mother whispers and that language is understood by the child but if you speak any [language with grammar] the child won't stop crying. You are close to that teacher and a language develops. That language is silence, and it is considered that through silence the best of the teachings are imparted through silence. In silence. When you don't have to speak. You don't have to speak."*

**V.60**
**Saraswati, the Flowing One, sings sweet songs in Your ears,**
**You absorb them, nodding Your head.**
**The power of knowledge in action**
**Causes Your earrings to jingle with delight.**

Saraswati is the goddess of speech, the union of power and intelligence from which organized creation arises, leading to correct action in the world of name and form. Hearing and speech are, as the previous two verses explain, closely related. For the Seeker, meditation without supporting knowledge is like a bell without a clapper.

Don Walker commented: "Turn it around and see how it sounds. Supportive Knowledge without meditation is like a bell without a clapper. In my experience direct knowledge comes from meditation. Any other knowledge is supportive of the intellect."

At the same time it is important to have a philosophy – at the intellectual level -- that comes from a teacher (in or out of body) who teaches from direct knowledge, as well as instruction in how to arrange our body, breath and mind for meditation. Trungpa Rinpoche use to refer to "dumb meditators": those who meditated without a philosophy.



Water 2000. Stoneware 8ft. Coll. Alexander Cockburn

The Seeker needs to train the intellect in order to go beyond the intellect. That is the function of the Yoga Sutras, which are the preliminary training in the Himalayan tradition.

54 min into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"You are very close to Mother. I'm talking about Divine Mother—the Mother in you, the Shakti in you, the power in you. Scientists proved that matter is nothing but energy. Matter can be converted into energy, and energy into matter. It's all energy. But that's all; nothing beyond that."*

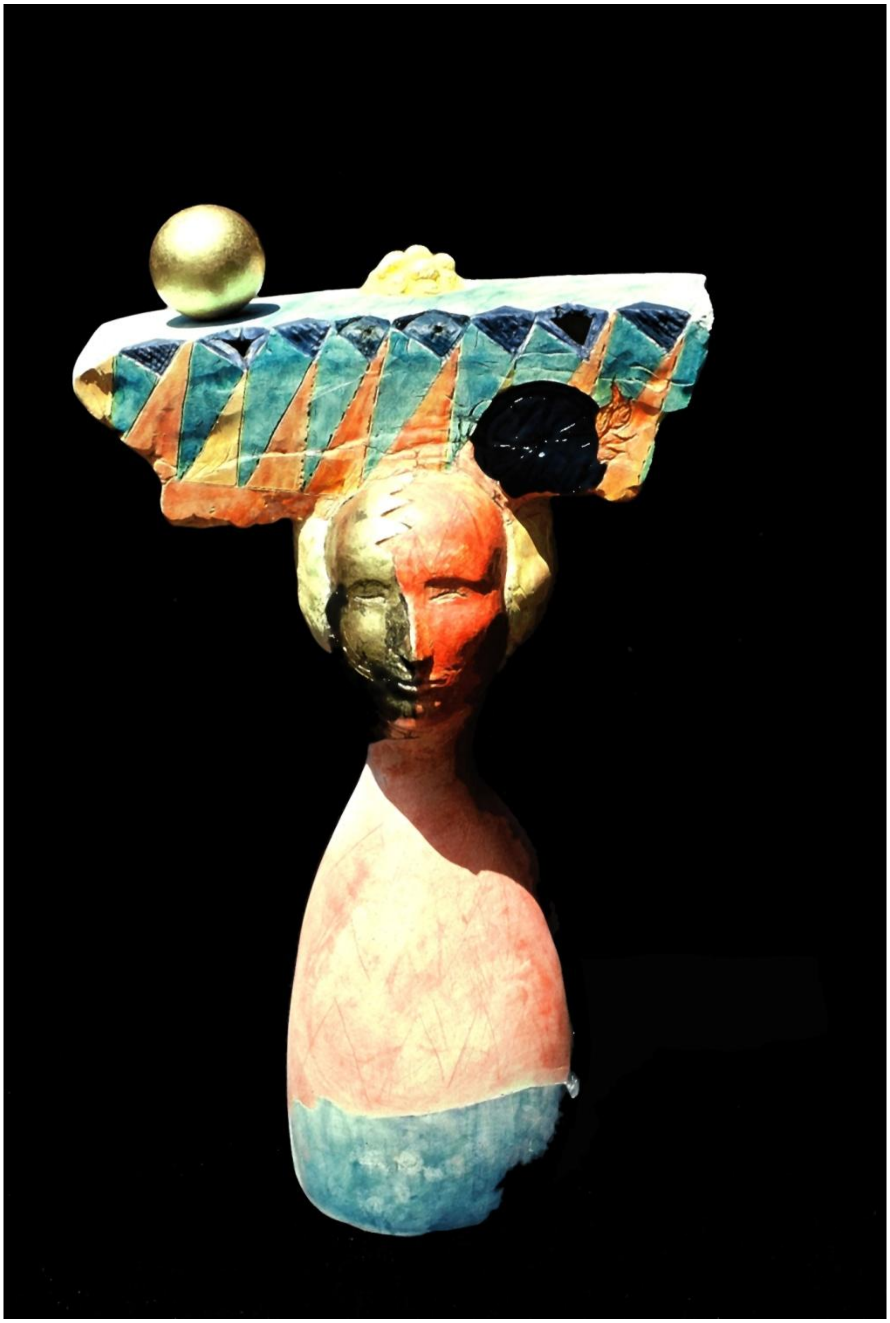
*Yoga science has gone to deeper levels explaining that you have Shakti within you. And without that Shakti, it is not possible for you to survive, it's not possible for you to act and to function. Any part of yourself—even your brain, your mind, your intellectualization, your convictions, your actions—are not possible without Shakti."*

**V.61**
**Elegant as a bamboo flagstaff on a Himalayan peak,**
**The ridge of Your nose blesses our journey,**
**Rare pearls flow from the lunar channel,**
**Carried on Your cooling breath.**

The range of the Himalayas is a metaphor for the subtle spine, with its upper termination at the nostrils. Ida Nadi ends at the left nostril, the lunar channel, the cooling channel. Pingala nadi, the solar channel, ends at the right nostril. The nadis are subtle channels which direct prana – the simile is hollow bamboo and precious pearls. If you've ever split a joint of fresh bamboo, the soft lining shows small, pearl-like clear drops of sap. "Pearl" is also a metaphor for "Bindu", or primary point.

The Seeker remembers that breathing exercises are done with the body; pranayama exercises are done with the mind. The essential breathing exercises -- Nadi Shodanum (alternate nostril breathing), Kapala Bhati, Bhastrika, and Agni Sara -- may be learned with the body and efforting, but sooner or later the efforting will dissolve. Nadi Shodanum pranayama leads to equal volume of breath in both nostrils, establishing subtle equilibrium in the central channel – sushumna. That control and resulting balance is necessary for the mind to concentrate on the bindu and to move beyond duality. As practice develops and deepens, the movement is always from gross to subtle: body to breath to mind to beyond mind.

About 1hr 2min. into Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: "*Now shortest cut I am giving you this time. Leave all that nose business [Nadi shodanum with fingers]. You have done enough. You have done for many years. Now you have to use your mental effort to regulate your breath. For simple reason, if you pay attention on this, (indicates left nostril) that nostril will become active. If you pay attention on this (indicates right nostril) that nostril will become active. You should learn to change the breath consciously once in a day, so that breath functions according to your conscious control.*"



Sunny Day 1978.  Earthenware, paint 10 in.

**V.62**
**The red of Your lips frames dazzling teeth,**
**Poets falter before such beauty.**
**Even the brightest red bimba fruit is a pallid reflection of**
**Your lips as Your bright white teeth liberate its juice.**

The Seeker recognizes that all colors in the world of name and form are but projections of the Divine Mother or Tripurasundari or Ma or … beyond. In India, a beautiful girl has "bimba lips", referring to the bright, bright red fruit of the Momordica monadelpha plant. There is probably a reference here to the subtle level of red and white: in the first step of devolution from primary point (bindu) to duality, Shiva and Shakti are often referred to as the "red and white" drops, Shiva = white and Shakti = red – on the physical level, semen and blood.

About 45min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"Now, I was talking to you about the pranic force, about the Mother Divine in you, who has created this structure, who has given you beauty, who has given you all this that you have. That Mother is there in you. That's direct Shakti. Sun without its light is not the sun. As sun is different from the light, but sun cannot exist without light, therefore, the Atman cannot exist without Atma Shakti. If there is no Atma Shakti, it's not Atma. If there is not light, it's not sun—though sun is different from its light. Yet, they are one and the same."*

Turiya – the fourth state – is already with you. Simply, it is living in the world and at the same time rising above it. The Seeker may be fooled into thinking it is difficult to attain, but in the end it is every day mind, simply living in the present "moment", free of the shackles of time and space yet also free to play joyfully in the world. **V.62**
**The red of Your lips frames dazzling teeth,**
**Poets falter before such beauty.**
**Even the brightest red bimba fruit is a pallid reflection of**
**Your lips as Your bright white teeth liberate its juice.**



Red Mirror 2003. Stoneware 20in. c. Jim Danisch

**V.63**
**Your smile radiates moonbeams, eagerly gobbled by Chakora birds.**
**Satiated with sweetness, their tongues become numb.**
**Unable to stop, they ferment sweetness into sour brew**
**Balancing the tastes to go beyond taste.**



Damaru 2004. Porcelain 20in. d. The Damaru is a two-headed drum with two attached (with a cord) wooden balls that produce sound when the drum is turned back and forth. It is one of Shiva's tools, and symbolizes the origin of the universe from soundless sound, the apparent separation of sun and moon. From the side it looks like two interlocked triangles: classic symbol of Shiva merged with Shakti.

Chakora birds are a kind of partridge that sings at night, and is said to drink moonlight. The external sweetness is balanced with internal sourness. Our tongues quickly lose sensitivity to one taste, until it is balanced by a contrasting taste, as good chefs know. For the Seeker, the "brew" or balancing of the solar and lunar nadis is necessary to open the central Sushumna Nadi, (or tongue with its one point). The Seeker notices that all of the verses return to unifying the opposites, going for one-pointed concentration. The tongue is associated with the jnanendriya of taste, which is connected with the second chakra, Manipura*, at the level of the navel.

Swami Rama relates: *"When I was a child, and I was trained by the swamis and they said, —Do you want to eat? I said, —Yes. They said, —No, we taught you `no' first. Ask others if you want to eat, and if they say `yes' offer your food to them first. Enjoy how they are eating. Are they enjoying the food you have offered? Can you give them some more comfort? Can you help them? Have you given them water? From the very beginning you should learn to enjoy how others are enjoying. You should feel happy, delighted how others are enjoying."*

**V.64**
**Your tongue, Mother, lovely as the China rose (japa),**
**Tirelessly recites mantra (japa) celebrating Shiva's many stories,**
**Saraswati's wisdom is a crystal drop on its tip,**
**Glowing with Your crimson.**

Here we progress from chakora birds' tongues (in the previous verse) to Her tongue. There is a double meaning in the Sanskrit word "japa". The Word celebrated in mantra evokes the symbol of Saraswati, Goddess of the Word, her crystal clearness permeated with crimson, the symbolic color of Tripura Sundari. Mantra leads to one point, the bindu at Ajna Chakra also symbolized by Saraswati, goddess of worldly knowledge. The clarity of one-pointedness allows true knowledge to shine through the veils that obscure it. In the end, these veils are no more than habit patterns, conditionings. They can dissolve by developing new habit patterns. Thus the importance of regular meditation practice at the same time or times, every day. The word "Jnana" below means true wisdom that comes from direct experience of theAbsolute, Brahman, the Void, the Immensity – whatever name you wish to use for the unnameable.

About 1hr42min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"Then comes—that purified mind is again disciplined here, [Anahata Chakra at the heart center] and it becomes human mind. That human mind is led and then given this circle. This is called Ajna Chakra [between the eyebrows]. 'A' means no, here; 'jna' means knowledge. So far, whatever you have done is not knowledge, and you'll be disappointed. Whatever you have done, it is all preparation—it is not knowledge. Even this chakra will not give you jnana. That's what he was talking about—jnana bandha.*



Cup 2007. Porcelain 4in.

*"Whatever little knowledge actually you have, you have first through this chakra, not from the other chakras. [Those were] All preparation. Preparation is more important than attainment. If you are not fully prepared, you are not able to attain. Preparation is very important. Therefore, don't ignore it. You say you don't want to prepare, that you are perfect, and you can straight away go. It's just like going to perform ballet dance without learning it."*

**V.65**
**Guided by Knowledge, the gods conquer the demons.**
**With helmets off, they turn away from the three cities they burned.**
**They want what is beyond the cities -- flakes of camphor white as the moon,**
**Cooling gifts from Your crimson mouth.**

This verse is a direct reference to the *Ramayana,* 7.2.16-17, which describes the winning of the three worlds and their inhabitants from the Asuras. Still focused on Tripura Sundari's mouth, She is portrayed chewing betel, which is often mixed with camphor. Betel turns saliva red, the color of Shakti. Camphor, when burned, disappears without a trace.

Samskaras -- habit patterns that distort our perception -- when burned in the fire of knowledge, lose their power. The Gods, as emanations of Her, recognize they are powerless without her, and surrender their helmets (egos). They want what is beyond the three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

The Seeker moves from efforting to surrender and silence. Hatha Yoga when done non-violently, helps prepare the body, breath and mind for meditation. Be careful when selecting a Yoga teacher – your teacher should be focused on yoga asanas which lead to a comfortable, steady sitting posture (not calisthenics!). Meditation leads beyond the mind-that-is-an-obstacle. Beyond the mind, there are no obstacles and no desires. Below, Swami Rama talks of "sleepless sleep". Part of the training for this is Yoga Nidra practice, along with meditation. There is practical information at www.swamij.com.

Around 20min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"Turiya, Saundaryalahari, Tripura Sundari, that's abode of mother. That is the relationship. Turiya is the abode of Mother from where she watches all three states: sleeping, dreaming, and waking. So enlightenment on the path of enlightenment, you attain Turiya. But devotees say, with her grace you can easily attain Turiya because it is her abode. That's why she's called Tripura Sundari. "Pura" means city. There are three cities: waking, dreaming, and sleeping. You are sitting in the three cities, and she is sitting in four cities—the fourth one is Turiya. So that is the relationship.*

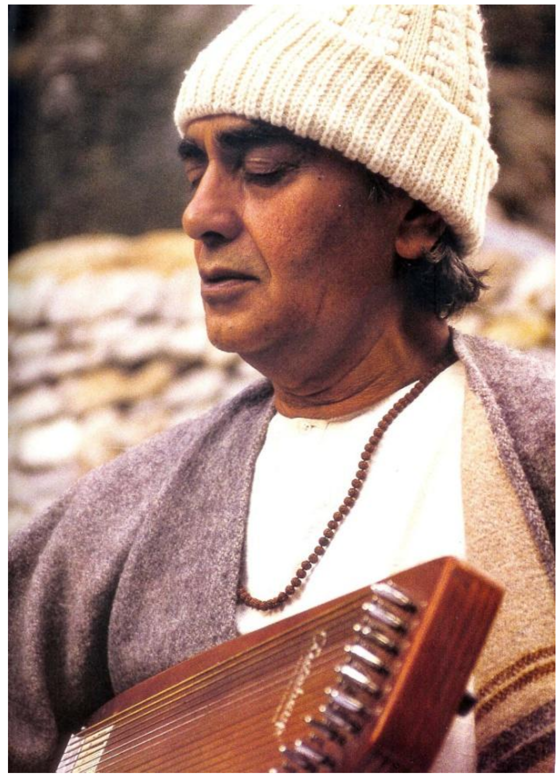
*"When you attain Turiya, you have gone beyond Samadhi. In Samadhi you attain a state of equilibrium—tranquility. Here, you go beyond that state, which is called sleepless sleep. You are in deep sleep, yet you are fully awake. That is the state you are in."*



Helmet Heads 2004. Stoneware, porcelain 3ft. c. Jim Danisch

**V.66**
**Saraswati sings songs to You, of Shiva's great deeds,**
**Accompanying herself with her vina.**
**When You compliment her, nodding Your head,**
**She covers the vina with a cloth, not to put its strings to shame**
**By the incomparable sweetness of Your voice.**

Saraswati, as the Goddess of knowledge and music, acknowledges that she (and all the Gods, who are but archetypal energies found in all sentient beings) is a servant of Tripura Sundari. Here Shiva is in a gentle form as Pashupati, the divine herdsman. The vina is a traditional Indian stringed instrument that is part of Saraswati's iconography. It has four main strings and three resonating strings that vibrate in sympathy with the plucked strings. Since all parts of traditional instruments are related to deities and energies and resonant frequencies, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that four strings represent the four states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep sleep and Turiya, the fourth state). The three resonating strings have no sound unless She is playing the other strings. All sounds arise from silence. The Vina, covered with a cloth, expresses silence. The Seeker, closing eyes, goes to silence.



About 40min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama tells the story of how he became famous for singing on All India Radio. He played the Vina (you can hear this on his CD Bhole Prabhu Sings). His master found out, beat him and told him not to sing for 30 years, saying:

*"'How far can you sing? How many people can you amuse?'*

*"I said, 'I don't sing for anybody; I sing for myself.'*

*"He said 'Then sing for yourself mentally. And what is this expressing dancing there?'*

*"I said, 'You sent me to the schools where this is taught. What can I do?'*

*"'If you really want to express yourself, then express yourself fully in meditation'.*

*"So he told me, that the finest of all is meditation. If you really want to express yourself, then express yourself fully during meditation, with full devotion, perfect control, with all your intelligence. These [other] expressions are external. The meditation expression is internal. One thing. This is directly training the mind. So anything you do—*

*you should do things in the world—you cannot remain without doing things—but those things should train your mind, too."*



Water Jar, Gaduwa Village, Deokhuri, Nepal. Potters cannot make pots until they directly experience the still point at the center of the wheel. The potters' wheel is often used as a metaphor in Indian stories.

**V.67**
**Daughter of the mountain, Your chin**
**-- such a fine handle for the mirror of Your face --**
**Was affectionately caressed**
**By Your father Himavan,**
**And lifted by the Lord of the mountain, Shiva,**
**In a passion to drink again and again from Your lips.**

Moving down from Her mouth, Her chin is compared to the handle of a mirror, reflecting Shiva and pointing out that they are one, but mirrors for each other in the world of name and form. The external guru (here as father) wakes us lovingly, guiding us to discover our own true nature and the guidance of our internal guru, the small inner voice of intuition.

About 42 min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"It has become a gimmick in these days. Those who do not want to do—lazy bones, you know— they say, 'We don't have to do anything; our guru is so powerful, he will give us Shakti. That's not true.*

*"Shaktipat comes when you have made full efforts, and then you do not know what to do. There you find a plateau and don't know how to go beyond that. Then you approach your teacher saying, 'I cannot go beyond this.' And he says, 'Go and make more effort,' and yet nothing happens. Then you cry. And sometimes you think, 'Perhaps my teacher also doesn't know how to go beyond this stage.'"*



The cup as metaphor. Foot, lip, handle, emptiness. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

**V.68**
**Your face and neck like a lotus flower on its stem --**
**Your Lord's embrace arouses its fine hairs,**
**While he destroys the three cities.**
**Your necklace of white pearls, dirtied by sandal paste, incense and myrrh,**
**Inspires the tender lotus stalk, shining through its muddy bed**
**To reveal your image.**

Shiva destroys the three cities. Shakti creates them. Shiva and Shakti, always one at the still center of the wheel, spin out the beauty of Maya. Tripura Sundari is compared once again to a lotus plant, its roots in mud, supported in water, blooming in air – a metaphor for the subtle spine and the path of Kundalini. In the West, the lotus is not a familiar image, but in the East where they grow in ponds, they are a common metaphor. The stems of lotuses have fine hairs – their arousal symbolizes the awakening of Kundalini. The three cities of waking, dreaming and sleeping are illuminated by Her. External offerings (incense, etc.) cannot obscure Her when we have surrendered to Her grace. Surrendered what?

In Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"First thing you should learn to attain is steady and comfortable posture, during meditation. First requirement is steady, comfortable posture. What do you mean by steady? Keeping your head, neck and trunk in a straight line is called steadiness. Of course, assimilating these upper and lower extremities, upper and lower limbs, go with it. But main point is to keep head, neck and trunk in a straight line. This is called steadiness, according to the school of meditation."*

In *Lectures on Yoga*, Ch. 7, Swami Rama writes: *"Surrender is the way of accepting the divine. Surrender means to offer all one has and not to insist on the primacy of one's own ideas and desires. Surrender empties the aspirant of ego and then fills him with divine truth. If he lets his mind take over, however, discussing and deciding what is to be done, he will be in danger of losing touch with the divine force. Then the lower energies will begin to act for themselves, and this will lead to confusion. A simple offering of the self to the divine, however, devoid of egoistic motives, brings immediate results. What is more, during this process the aspirant does not renounce the world and abandon his duties. He lives in the world. But he lives like the lotus which, though rooted in mud and supported by water, blossoms in air and sunlight."*



Driveby Sculpture Detail 2006.  Stoneware, multi-part.

**V.69**
**You, Mother, are expert in singing theme, variations and lyrics,**
**Your husband tied three circles of marriage thread**
**Around Your graceful neck.**
**Those three soft creases hide the origins**
**Of the three tunings of the Vina.**

The theme of three comes in yet another form, with some esoteric references to Indian classical music on three different levels, a reference to the thread that is tied around the bride's neck at marriage, and the folds of the neck. Simply, she is in and behind and about the three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and deep sleep, symbolized by the three tunings of the vina. The complex appearance of the world of the senses, skillfully managed by making a friend of your mind, leads to harmony, simplicity and one truth.

How to make a friend of your mind? Before you sit to meditate, make a friend of your body with some simple stretches, releasing the tensions so you can sit steady and comfortable. Then make a friend of your breath, allowing it to become smooth and regular, managed by the diaphragm, eliminating pauses between inhale and exhale. Then make a friend of your mind by having a dialogue with it: "Mind – be my friend." Let all the conscious thoughts surface, observe them and let them dissolve. Then sink deeper. With regular daily practice, this comes automatically, sooner or later. "Regular" is the key word.

40 min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"So there are three paths, three schools. Those who are the worshippers in the external world, they are called Kaula. And those who have awareness that there is something beyond this world, as Kashmir Shaivism says, 'What is God? That which is not the world is called God', they say. You'll have to deny first that this world is not God, then you'll know what God is. So second is Mishra. Third is Samaya.*

*"'Samaya' means, 'I am with you.' When you are conscious that the Lord is with you all the time, you have attained something."*



Triple Junction Bowl 2004. Stoneware 16in. c. Jim Danisch

**V.70**
**Four-headed Brahma was born in a lotus flower,**
**with one head for each function of mind.**
**Wanting to go beyond mind, his ego grew a fifth head looking up.**
**Shiva cut it off to teach him truth.**
**Brahma praises the beauty of Your four soft arms,**
**Hoping You will let him keep his remaining four heads.**

This is a long comment, and could easily be expanded to a chapter in itself. In a nutshell, the Seeker needs to learn about the Four Functions of Mind so they can be managed, allowing one-pointed concentration and meditation.

For those of you without a connection to the symbolism, this verse is challenging. It contains so much inner meaning. Here's a bit of it: Vishnu, sleeping on the serpent God Shesha, sprouted a lotus from his navel (Manipura Chakra = the element of Fire). When it opened, the god Brahma appeared and the world appeared. Although Brahma is one of the trinity along with Shiva and Vishnu, there are many stories of how he compromised himself in various ways. Because of this, there are almost no temples in honor of Brahma. Brahma represents one of the three gunas, where Sattva and Tamas are represented by either Shiva or Vishnu. Brahma = Rajas or movement, and creates all the stuff of the perceptible world: Maya. For Westerners who haven't studied Indian spirituality, another confusion is between "Brahman, Brahma and Brahmin". Brahman is a word that means the Absolute, undescribable consciousness out of which we all arise, Brahma is the god, and Brahmin is one of the priestly caste.

In Yoga psychology, we learn that Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara and Chitta are the four functions of mind. Before we can proceed very far spiritually, we have to learn how our minds work and make efforts to coordinate the four functions so we are not controlled by our "little" minds and emotions, or by our undeveloped egos. Only then is it possible to access one-pointed concentration and to go beyond the mind in meditation, to find a fifth head.

One message (of many) here is that Ahamkara (ego) must be put in its proper place and trained, in order for the Divine to shine through the veils of Maya that keep us away from our true selves. The truth is "I am that" – no separateness. There still is an "I" – Ahamkara – in that statement. But Ahamkara has been expanded to the highest truth, removing the false idea of separateness that little ego creates.

About 50min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"So you are going beyond, after analyzing and understanding all different functions of your mind: manas, chitta, buddhi, and antahkarana [the four functions of mind, or the inner instrument]. You can have a dialogue, a free dialogue with yourself, by understanding, 'Is it my mind -- that is dictating the terms for me -- that is confusing?' Whenever you are confused, sit down. You are confused because you have not made a decision, you have not asked your buddhi. That's why you are confused. Mind will confuse. Mind will give you many suggestions. 'Which way shall I go? This way, or this way?' Unless mind takes help from buddhi, it will always be confused. You are confused because your buddhi is not functioning well. Remember this. Anybody who says, 'I am confused,' you are not using your buddhi. How will two and two make four?*

*"If you don't use your buddhi, you will go on asking this. Confusion lies because you are*

*not taking help from your buddhi. Dialogue means trying to be aware. 'Well, this mind, this manas, is confusing me. Why should I not take help from my buddhi?'*

*"What is my ego? Ego helps in the external world. We can polish, purify that ego, and use it for right purpose. So you think that ego is that faculty which is always bad? No. Bad ego is bad!*

*"So when you understand four aspects separately, and enter into dialogue, that dialogue will help you sometimes to go beyond. What is beyond this, beyond this wheel? What is inside this? Beyond this wheel?'"*



Platter with Four Corners 2004. Porcelain 14 in.

## An Interpretation of *Saundaryalahari* by Adi Shankaryacharya (second edition)

## Verse 71 – 100

## By Jim Danisch

## With teachings of Swami Rama and Zen Master Seung Sahn

Saundaryalahari was one of Swami Rama's favorite scriptures that he used to teach practices of Shri Vidya Samaya Tantra. The practices seem complex until we realize that all practices are designed to carry the Seeker to the point where they become automatic and are dropped. My first teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn (Soen Sa Nim) took all practices to the simplest common denominator ("Only go straight, only keep don't know mind"). As I contemplated Shankara's poetry, Soen Sa Nim was more and more present, with his continuous reminders, pointing out that all practices, all conceptions, may be useful for a while but quickly become obstacles to clear view. At the end, all these words and images lead to silence and stillness and Largest Love.

**V.71**
**Mother! How can words equal the beauty of Your hands?**
**Your nails glow with more passion than a blooming lotus,**
**When goddess Laxmi dances on its petals,**
**It mirrors your beauty,**
**Infused with the color of her crimson-painted feet.**

The Seeker sits comfortably and steadily, the breath slows – diaphragmatic and circular, the mind quiets and the senses do not disturb. Lights may appear in the thought field, sounds may come, yantras (visual symbols like Shri Yantra) may appear. Let them dissolve. They are beautiful distractions that prevent meditation. Many people believe that "guided meditation" is meditation. It is not: it is pleasant and useful for relaxation and for learning the subtle body, but better to call it guided teaching.

Laxmi is the power of Vishnu, the power of multiplicity or fortune, the goddess of beauty, known as Shri. Her image holds a red lotus. But no red is equal to Tripura Sundari. The Seeker gets lost in symbols, notices his distraction, comes back to one-pointed concentration and remembers to go for complete darkness.

Around 1hr30min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"Decide and determine that 'I am not going to see anything.' …..*

*"Yet, tattvas will bring forward their colors. It comes and goes. It doesn't matter. Pay attention towards your focal point [ajna]. It has many meanings. You can interpret this circle. (Circle at ajna chakra) . This circle could be a dark hole. This can be a circle. This can be a pit. So here, inside this point here, when I told you to just meditate on this point, just on the complete darkness. Then you'll start seeing the light from within."*

"Tattva" in this case refers to the subtle elements that are related to the chakras: earth, water, fire, air, space.



Black Bottle 1983. Earthenware 18in.

**V.72**
**Your sons**
**Skanda and elephant-faced Ganesh,**
**Simultaneously suckle your ever-flowing breasts.**
**Ganesh brings laughter, when he confuses them for the bulges on his forehead**
**Not separate from You.**

Mother, Skanda, Ganesh. The Seeker's effort is to purify the mind so that Shakti – the essential energy in you, the primary energy out of which all other energy comes -- can move up sushumna, the central channel. Mother is the purifier. Skanda symbolizes the upward force. Ganesh symbolizes removal of obstacles. Both are necessary for Kundalini Shakti to rise.

How to remove obstacles that prevent meditation? What obstacles? The first obstacle is the undisciplined mind which tends to run away with itself and scatter its energy. That can be understood as undisciplined Shakti energy that prevents concentration. The first step is to understand and observe the four functions of mind – Manas (the lower mind), Buddhi (the higher mind), Ahamkara (Ego) and Chitta (the reservoir of memories) – and how they work together.

When you sit for meditation, first clear the conscious mind and the strong impressions that rise up by offering them to the fire of higher wisdom. Thoughts will come, but with practice they will no longer disturb. Many students get caught in the idea that there should be no thoughts – that is a misconception about meditation. Thoughts arise and dissolve, arise and dissolve, no problem. A car can have its engine running, but until gears are engaged it won't move. A mind can have thoughts running, but unless they engage other thoughts, often referred to as a "train of thoughts", they will not disturb.

Almost at the end of Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"A good, trained, orderly mind is that mind which does not create obstacles for you, which has stopped creating obstacles for you. And when you want to use it in the world, you should. And when you don't want to use it, don't use it. But during meditation, it should not disturb you. [A] serious problem is over if you have consciously asked all the thoughts [to come], and offering [those] thoughts in the fire, here — jnana chakra, or guru chakra." [Guru chakra is "located" at the upper forehead, above Ajna chakra]*

41min into Lecture 4: *"When the student is ready, is eager to know—then upward traveling. Who travels upwards? Shakti. Then there is no way of traveling downward. Or, if Shakti travels downward, then it is under your conscious control—never beyond that—never beyond conscious control."*

57min into Lecture 4: *"So when the teachers sees all these hurdles and barriers, he or she takes on the path of—when the student says—when he's crossing sixty-five, seventy—and he says, 'I have seen. Now I would like to—please give me. I find this difficulty.' Then this initiation is given. Upward traveling. For the trend of the mind is downward. That's the point."*

There are many techniques for learning "upward traveling", which should be given by a competent teacher when the Seeker is prepared.

For those who enjoy the stories and symbolism, this gets a bit long now.  Ganesh is familiar to most Westerners as the elephant-headed god, and Skanda is his mostly unknown brother.  Their mother is Parvati – another personification of Shakti – wife of Shiva.

This is the kind of scene that is so loved in India, with its attachment to family life.  It's easy to imagine the baby Ganesh, lost in nursing, opening his eyes and wondering if the breast-like bulges in his forehead had become his mother's breasts.

The stories of Ganesh and Skanda are both long and involved, since there is so much symbolism packed into both of their characters – enough for another long commentary, so I won't do it here.  Both were conceived without much direct help from Shiva:  Ganesh from some dirt rubbed from Parvati's body and brought to life; Skanda from Shiva's semen that was so fiery it was first swallowed by Agni, God of Fire, then cooled by Ganga (water) and ended up in a grass thicket where Skanda ("Spurt of Semen") was born.  Skanda is also known as Kumar.

Ganesh is known as the remover of obstacles.  Because he was born of dirt, he relates to Muladhara chakra (Earth), and guards Kundalini Shakti who is sleeping there.  The Seeker worships him so he will allow Kundalini to enter Sushumna.

Skanda or Kumar also has many associations, but in Kundalini Yoga is the chastity that reverses the direction of semen into Sushumna and up to Ajna, the mouth of fire, where it is transformed into higher knowledge.



Stepping Out 1978.  Earthenware, paint, wood, satin 22in.

**V.73**
**Your breasts are ruby jars of nectar.**
**Your two sons, the crusher Skanda and the elephant-headed Ganesh**
**Drink from them continuously, so have never desired the sweet drink**
**Of intercourse with women.**

The two complementary energies of crushing negative thoughts (Skanda) and removing obstacles (Ganesh) are strengthened by the inner nourishment of Shakti (the primordial energy of manifestation), personified as Mother Divine or Tripura Sundari, beyond positive and negative. When sexual energy is redirected as subtle energy traveling upward in sushumna, the central channel, by balancing and concentrating ida and pingala nadis (Her two breasts), the lasting joy is greater than the brief joy of sexual intercourse. It is the source of that flashing joy. Why not go to the source?

The Seeker engages pratyahara, usually translated as "withdrawal of the senses". Another meaning is "control of food" – as David Frawley points out: "Pratyahara is twofold. It involves withdrawal from wrong food, wrong impressions and wrong associations, while simultaneously opening up to right food, right impressions and right associations."

In getting set up for meditation, attention moves deliberately from gross to subtle: body to breath to mind. The body is made comfortable by Yoga asanas so it can sit still and not disturb. The breath is allowed to become slow and circular and not disturb. The conscious mind is allowed to play itself out and not disturb. The senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, taste and smell do not disturb. What remains?

54 minutes into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: "*That Vidya which leads you systematically is called Shri Vidya, highest of all vidyas. Ask Mother and you are fully protected. These experiments have been done:"*

*"Wild elephant was left with [a] child and [its] father. Father ran away and left the child there.*

*"Wild elephant was left when [a] mother was walking with [her] child. Mother faced the elephant. We are very close to mother.*

*"I am talking about Divine Mother, the Mother in you, the Shakti in you, the power in you. Science has proved that matter is energy. Matter can be converted into energy and energy into matter. But that's all, nothing beyond that. Yogic science has gone to deeper level, explaining that you have Shakti within you. And without that Shakti it is not possible for you to survive, it is not possible for you to function [in] any part of yourself, even your brain, your mind, your visualizations, your actions -- are not possible without Shakti. This systematic path, loving path, most glorious, majestic path is introduced by the teachers when you have enough time…."*



Vishnu Schist 2004. Stoneware 5ft.

**V.74**
**Above Your breasts hangs a necklace of pearls found**
**In the skull of the elephant demon destroyed by Shiva,**
**Its brilliant white reflects Your crimson lips,**
**Confluence of red and white.**

Pearls are found by Sanskrit poets in many places: between the frontal globes of elephants, in the heads of serpents, in bamboo, in clouds and in sugarcane. They represent concentrations of spiritual energy, or bindus. In the heart are said to be two primary drops of red and white, which symbolically represent Shiva and Shakti, or sperm and blood. When we find the central channel, Sushumna Nadi, we regain the truth that Shiva and Shakti are one and the same.

How to find this central channel? It is not a wire or a pipe or anything material; it is a subtle energy channel, but still exists in time and space. When the Seeker is able to sit still and comfortably so the body no longer disturbs, attention can be concentrated on the breath, first at the point between the nostrils where the septum meets the upper lip. Be aware of the breath at that point, and note whether one nostril is more open than the other. This is normal, and the dominant nostril changes throughout the day and night. Gently focus attention on the more blocked nostril, and allow it to relax and open. Most people can do this without using fingers in the practice of Nadi Shodanum. Sooner or later both nostrils will flow equally. Then exhale from top of head to tip of tailbone, and inhale from tip of tailbone to top of head, always breathing diaphragmatically and eliminating pauses between inhale/exhale and exhale/inhale. This practice may seem artificial at first, but will soon come automatically, bringing the Seeker to a direct experience of the movement of prana in Sushumna Nadi. As always, this needs to be learned with the help of a competent teacher.

After the two previous verses praising Ganesh, we're confronted with his complement, an elephant demon that is an obstacle. Without getting complicated (there are many stories), I like to think that Ganesh represents the guardian of Muladhara chakra, and although he is the remover of obstacles that allow Kundalini to awake, after he has done his job he himself becomes an obstacle, and we need to move on, having received his gifts of wisdom. The elephant in Sanskrit is *gaja*; ga = goal and ja = the origin of AUM. The Seeker has to transform from animal to higher Self, represented by the head of the elephant. And the union of higher and lower is in the heart center, Anahata chakra, the area between the breasts where hangs the necklace.

About 11min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"In reality, you are lonely. All are lonely. That loneliness will be there because you have forgotten the real Friend within yourself, and you have established friendship with strangers. And strangers cannot be relied upon. You assume what you call duties: "My wife, my children, my home." All these assumptions create attachment for you…. But in the heart of hearts, when you know that the greatest of all friends is within me, then you'll be never lonely."*

About 1 hour into Lecture 2, on balancing the nadis with the practice of Nadi Shodanum: "*Now shortest cut I am giving you this time. Leave all that nose business. You have done enough. You have done for many years. Now you have to use your mental effort to regulate your breath. For simple reason, if you pay attention on this, (indicates left nostril) that nostril will become active. If you pay attention on this (indicates right nostril)*

*that nostril will become active. You should learn to change the breath consciously once in a day, so that breath functions according to your conscious control."*

The Seeker breaths, contemplates, meditates, contemplates, meditates….



Covered Jar 1997.  Porcelain 24 in.

**V.75**
**The milk from Your breasts, Daughter of the Mountains,**
**Flows into the ocean of poets' minds,**
**Filling them with poetry.**
**When You compassionately fed it to an innocent child**
**He became the greatest of the poets laureate.**

Great poetry requires inspiration from beyond the intellect. Still focused at the heart level, between the breasts, Shankara gives us another image of how creation at any level requires Shakti, whether it's scrambling eggs or painting a great painting. Her compassion is always available, but we know it directly only when we shed the layers of conditioning that keep us separate.

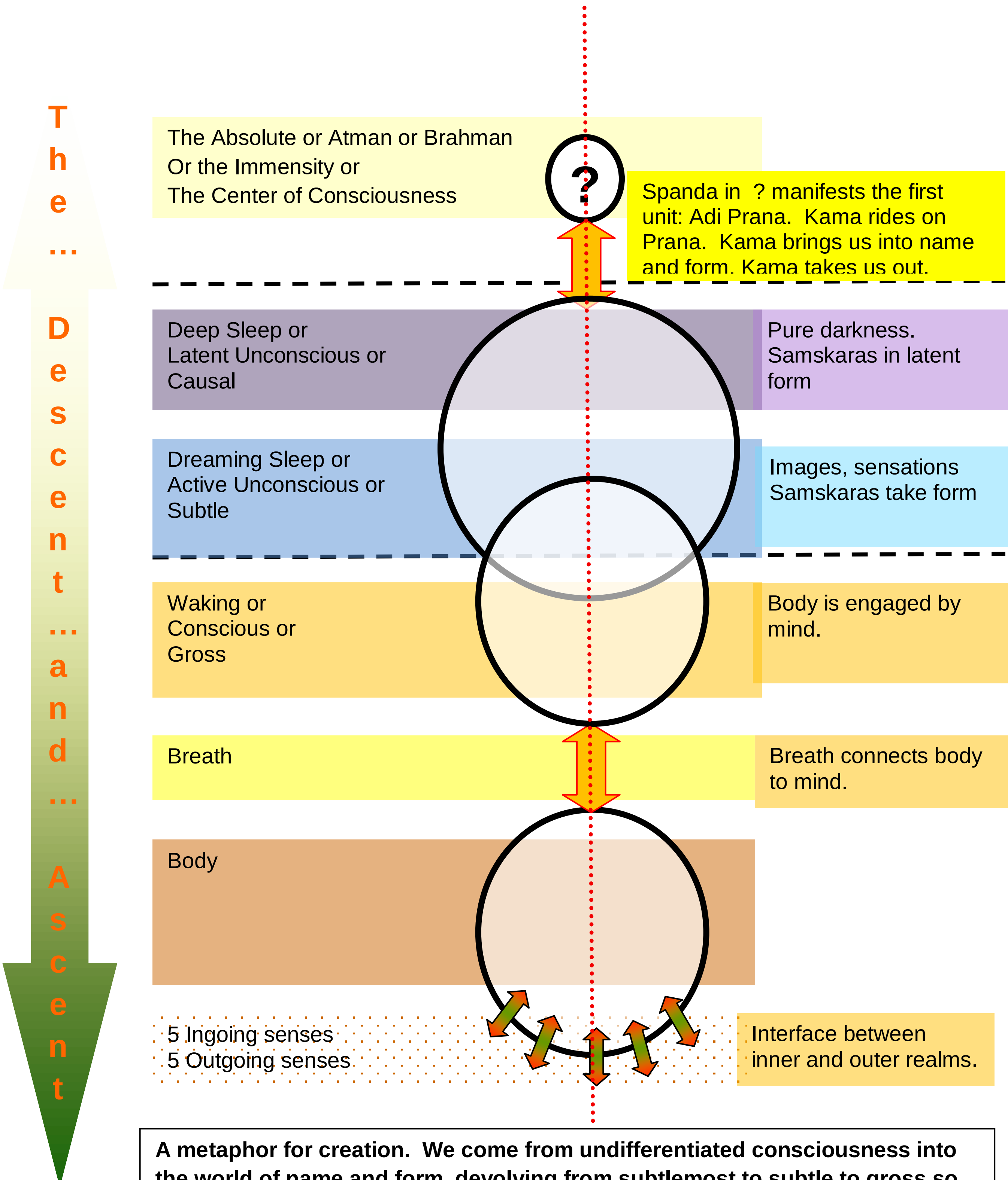
Prana – undifferentiated essential energy – is the first manifestation of Shakti. It then subdivides into different areas of the subtle body. Pranayama practices help us to come in touch with this energy, and to channel it "upwards", more and more subtle until it leads us back to the center of consciousness, that still point at the center of the circle. Breath is the carrier of prana on the gross level.

There are many breath exercises and pranayama exercises. The difference is that breath exercises are done with the body; pranayama is done with the mind. Teachers rarely go beyond breath exercises. There are many ways of teaching practices such as Kapala Bhati, Bhastrika and Agni Sara. Often they are taught as vigorous, fast exercises, bordering on violence to the body and mind. Kumbhaka, stopping the breath either out or in, is also taught to extremes that are not helpful. The effect of the pause only lasts as long as the pause, then you have to breathe again, and the mind is disturbed.

There is no need to bounce and shake – that puts the nervous system and mind into overdrive. Find a comfortable pace when you are first learning, and pay attention to your capacity. Gradually build up the number of repetitions. Particularly pay attention to the experience when you complete an exercise, and whether the mind comes to stillness or not. We learn to connect with the movement of prana by beginning with the body, but sooner or later the movement ceases, and the awareness is of pure prana without movement. This Kumbhaka happens automatically, at any point in the inhale/exhale cycle, and is usually called "Kevala Kumbhaka".

About 50min. into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"Now, I was talking to you about the pranic force, about the Mother Divine in you, who has created this structure, who has given you beauty, who has given you all this that you have. That Mother is there in you. That's direct Shakti. Sun without its light is not the sun. As sun is different from the light, but sun cannot exist without light, therefore, the atman cannot exist without atma Shakti. If there is no atma Shakti, it's not atma. If there is not light, it's not sun—though sun is different from its light. Yet, they are one and the same.*

*"So is the case with the Mother Divine and Shiva, the ultimate Reality which is not subject to change. It has no gender. It's not "she," it's not "he." It's not child, and it's not old. It has no name, no form, yet you use a name and form to go beyond the name and form."*




**A metaphor for creation. We come from undifferentiated consciousness into the world of name and form, devolving from subtlemost to subtle to gross so we can interact in the world. We go out by reversing the process. Meditation is the practice to learn this.** (The diagram is a variation on the model presented by Swami Rama in his Saundaryalahari lecture series. Other variations are at www.swamij.com.)



Fish Portrait 2004. Stoneware 8 ft.

**V.76**
**When Shiva's anger lit Kama on fire,**
**He dove into the deep lake of Your navel.**
**Steam rose from the coals and**
**Became the soft line of hair rising to Your heart.**

The Seeker practices Agni Sara, igniting the solar fire at the navel center, Manipura. "Agni" means "fire". This is a physical exercise done with the body, and also a subtle pranayama exercise done with the mind. It has the physical effect of producing heat, it stimulates the appetite and digestion, as well as sexual energy. On the subtle level, it moves prana to Manipura chakra, and transmutes sexual energy into subtle Kundalini energy.

A qualified teacher (one who teaches from direct experience) is necessary for individual guidance. For example, Agni Sara is taught in many different styles, not all of which assist upward traveling. In the beginning, the Seeker is concerned with the body and efforting. Practice leads to surrender and non-violence. Surrender reveals the highest truth. The movement is from gross to subtle: body, breath, mind, beyond mind.

Vasistha reminds us that "These yogic methods bring about the desired results if they are practiced without violence or force. When one is firmly established in such practice with simultaneous growth in dispassion and when the mental conditioning comes under perfect restraint, there is fruition of the restraint of the movement of prana."

Agni Sara is usually taught in a standing position, but as the practice is mastered and becomes more and more subtle, less done with the body, a sitting position is appropriate.

The path of awakened Kundalini up the chakras is from Muladhara at the base of the spine, through water at Swadisthana, and then through fire at the navel center, Manipura. Water + Fire = Steam, automatically taking Shakti higher to the heart center, Anahata.

Parvati (Shakti) sent Kama (Desire) to rouse Shiva from his meditation. Shiva hit him with a burst of fire and destroyed him. He was quenched by the compassion of Mother, who not wanting lust to vanish from the world, combined fire with water to create steam. There is a play here between Kama-on-fire and the internal fire of the navel center, and a play between the fire that Kama brings to lovers, and Shiva's fire of asceticism that transforms lower desires into desire for the highest union with the center of consciousness. In Kundalini Yoga, the fire of the navel center is the force which propels Shakti to the heart center and beyond.

About 1hr15min. into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"So those who are teachers, before they teach kaula or mishra, they first teach their students something about this solar power at manipura chakra. Concentrating on this chakra, which is situated at the navel in triangular form, that indicates that the flames of the fire go higher, upwards. So, making their mind one-pointed, they do it."*

45 min into Lecture 4: *"The renunciates give diksha to their students on this path, and one of the finest paths of diksha is upward traveling. [draws five short lines at bottom, the fifth extends upward as a sinuous line, topped with an arrow] When the student is ready, when he is eager to know this, then upward traveling. Who travels upwards? Shakti. Then there is no way of traveling downwards. If Shakti travels downward, then it is under your conscious control, never unconscious."*

50min: *"There is a method of initiation which is called upward traveling. In upward traveling, vigorous pranayama exercise, not breathing—pranayama exercise – is taught with certain bandhas, and then the food that is secreted by the ovaries and testes starts going upwards."*

**V.77**
**Your jar-like breasts with the sky between,**
**Rubbing against each other, create what seems**
**A slight ripple on the blue Yamuna river, a line of hair resembling**
**The wide sky squeezed thin, entering the cavern of Your navel.**

When the heart chakra is no longer blocked, the Seeker experiences a great opening, which may be gradual or sudden. Animal nature is transformed into human nature. This evolution of embodied spirit radiates in all directions, purifying the lower chakras as well as going higher. Many people find the heart chakra (Anahata) a natural focal point for the object of meditation. It is "located" between the breasts, and in the symbolism of the cross, is the junction of the horizontal and vertical axes of the subtle body – a place of balance and love.

The word "location", when talking of the subtle body – the energy body – makes sense, since the subtle body is still located in time and space. The experience of "location" will vary between individuals, but not significantly.

The practice of Bhuta Shuddhi, which is a journey through the seven chakras up and down Sushumna, replaces an intellectual "map" of the chakras with direct experience. For some this happens immediately, for others it takes time. There are many variations on the practice, some with complicated visualizations and others that are very simple. The Seeker remembers that "complicated" has to transform to "simple" or it becomes an obstacle; practice leads to mastery – meaning automatic. After learning to walk, we no longer need to think about how to do it.

Space and sky and river. The Yamuna River was born of the sun, and many famous saints chose to do their sadhana on its banks. Mother's breasts (jar-like because they resemble the full rounded form of a clay water jar), symbolized as Sun and Moon, hot and cool, Ida and Pingala, on the horizontal axis, bring the Seeker's focus to Sushumna on the vertical axis, as the wide sky squeezed thin. This line connects fire at the navel center with air at the heart center. In V. 76 the movement is upward from the navel, here it is downward from heart center to navel.

About 45 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says*: "Then he [the teacher] imparts the knowledge of macrocosm and microcosm. Pinda and Brahman. Pinda is this body—the mind is the universe. What is the difference between the drop of water and the ocean? They are qualitatively one and the same. But they are not quantitatively one and the same. Once you understand the very summum bonum of your life, the very existence of this life, this individual, which is not body, which is not breath, not at all senses, which is not your thinking process, including your emotions, appetites and inclinations—which is beyond this. Beyond means not far away—within you. Whole philosophy and its dictionary changes.*

*Beyond, if you tell, [usually means] it's beyond your reach. It means it's far away in India, Himalayas, Tibet or somewhere. Beyond means the senses are beyond your body; the mind is beyond your senses; the soul is beyond your mind. So[it is] within [that] the whole concept changes."*



Dark Circle (detail) 2004.  Stoneware, porcelain.

**V.78**
**Daughter of the Mountain Peak, Your navel serves in so many ways:**
**Vase to hold a motionless whirlpool of the Ganga, source of the vine that supports the buds of your breasts,**
**Pit for Kama's sacrificial fire and bower for Rati's* pleasure,**
**Cave where Shiva can attain his goal.**

(*Rati is Kama's wife)

The Seeker practices Agni Sara to bring awareness to the third chakra and light the subtle fire. Those of us who practice Yoga asana and pranayama as preparation for meditation are usually taught an ideal form that we try to follow. But we can get so hung up on the form that we forget to look at the result. I've witnessed heated arguments about Agni Sara form among Seekers and teachers in the same lineage.

Very few teachers talk about perfect effect: what is the desired result of doing the asana or breath exercise or pranayama practice? All practice needs to be done in the spirit of experimentation, since direct experience provides the only proof of the practice. Again, taking the example of Agni Sara, why are we doing it? Like all asana and pranayama practices, it works on more than one level:

Agni Sara is designed to stimulate the "solar system", or the fire in the abdominal area. On the gross or body level, it creates physical heat that helps with digestion and assimilation. This body level heat is called "jathara agni". On the pranic level, it stimulates Manipura chakra, the navel center. Inhale, moving prana vayu up from tip of tailbone to top of head. Exhale, moving prana down from head to tailbone – apana vayu. Engage the small band of lower abdominals that cover the pubic bone on the exhale, rolling it inward and upward, reversing apana so that it meets prana at the navel center, creating subtle heat or fire, called "bhuta agni". This meeting creates subtle "friction", like fire sticks rubbing together. (The five bhutas that are associated with the first five chakras from bottom up are earth, water, fire, air and space).

What is perfect effect? On the physical level, we may feel heat in the abdomen, at least when we are learning the practice. This is a good indicator of correctness, no matter how "imperfectly" you do the movement. On the pranic level, we may feel energy moving up the subtle spine, perhaps as far as the top of head. This energy is Kundalini Shakti, which when activated first through the physical action of hatha yoga, then at the subtle level of prana, helps us to go through the three states of consciousness – waking, dreaming and sleeping – to beyond the mind, the fourth state or Turiya. As with all these practices, as we make progress we become more and more aware of the subtle levels, and the need for physical action falls away.

Agni Sara is often taught as a vigorous physical exercise with huffing and puffing, which of course has physical health benefits. But at this level it is not useful for raising subtle Kundalini Shakti.

As center of Her thin waist (the Seeker needs to concentrate all energy in the Sushumna, otherwise never can get past the navel), Her navel is a place of great power. As fire, as lake, as cooling bower, as cave, it concentrates the energy to take the Seeker to the higher chakras.

As third chakra, the navel center is the locus of subtle fire. Whirlpool and vase, motion and stillness, balance each other, bringing Kundalini up Sushumna to support sun and moon. Kama and Rati balance each other's energies, and Shiva finds a cave in which to meditate.

At 1hr 6min into Lecture 2, Swami Rama says*: "So after attaining a steady and comfortable posture, unique….then you learn one practice, very good practice. Stay awake and practice it, this is compared with the physical exercise, finest of all exercises in Yoga, which is Agni Sara. If it is done correctly, it's a unique exercise. A man of 80 or 100 will have energy like a man of 30 years old. This is a wonderful thing, provided you do Agni Sara, a powerful vigorous exercise that activates the solar system."*



Fire 2000. Stoneware 5 ft.

**V.79**
**Ornament of Womankind!  Your slender waist with its three folds**
**Is bent under the weight of Your breasts,**
**Like a tree on the precarious bank of a river in flood,**
**May Your waist be safe and strong.**

Stability of the body and mind comes with regular, systematic practice.  Having awakened the higher chakras, having loosened the attachments to external stimuli that keep body and mind clouded, it is easy to lose concentration and be swept away again by the river of the external world.

The connection between external and internal space is the five ingoing and five outgoing senses.   The external world is perceived in the mind through sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing, and how we perceive it depends on the nature of our conditionings and mind impressions (Samskaras) that filter and distort direct experience.  The internal world is expressed from the mind through movement, elimination, multiplying, grasping and speaking.  Our purity of expression is shaped by our conditionings and mind impressions (Samskaras) that distort our external projection.  As we burn Samskaras in the fire of wisdom, their influence lessens, and our experience becomes clear and simple.  It is easier to recognize the everyday soap opera of existence as a drama that we can play in, doing what we have to do lovingly and well, doing what we love to do skillfully, and yet not being attached to this or that result.

Ornament refers to the red dot that adorns the space between the eyebrows, Ajna Chakra.  This “Tilak” or “Tikka” is applied as Shakti Prasad by women and men in India and Nepal.  The three folds are at the navel, above and below, or Swadisthana, Anahata and Manipura.

About 1hr 41min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *“Animal does not want, animal mind does not want to be in the circle.  That’s why animal mind is trained here [anahata].  Animal mind means that negative part of mind which runs towards the world, and refuses to go to fathoms of finer forces of life within you. Rajasic mind and animal mind, animal mind is actually burnt here, [manipura], as gold is burnt in the fire.  And then ornaments are made.  Animal mind is burnt here.  Then comes that purified mind, disciplined in anahata, becomes human mind.  That human mind is led and then given this circle.  This is called Ajna chakra.  A means in Sanskrit ‘No’.  Means no knowledge.”*

The Seeker in meditation focuses on the small circle between the eyebrows:  the end of lower knowledge and the gateway to highest knowledge of the center of consciousness.



Baroque Passage 2005.  Stonewarre 8 ft.

**V.80**
**Mother Divine!  When You think of Shiva**
**and are overcome by his undivided attraction,**
**Your perspiring breasts burst their bodice, shining like two golden water jars.**
**Kama, Desire's troublemaker, ties three strands of Lavali vine around Your waist**
**To support the weight of his creation.**

We experience the inner and outer worlds in three states of consciousness:  waking, dreaming and deep sleep.  The silence and darkness of deep sleep is very close to her, and knowledge at that level of mind is formless and latent.  As those thoughts take form, they are experienced in dreaming sleep, mixed with external impressions that have entered from the external world through the senses.  Our waking minds are influenced by dreams, and by external sensations, and often become confused because of distorted data.  It is this confused mind that has to act in the world.  Meditation allows us to witness all three of these states of mind for what they are, so we can go beyond them.  This is not to withdraw from the world, but to learn how to dance skillfully.

In the non-dual center of consciousness, a wave of desire spontaneously appears as duality – two golden pots.  Kama, symbolizing desire, adds the relationship between the two, and the three gunas arise as the basis of all creation.  The Seeker contemplates desire, and realizes that there are worldly desires that lead to suffering, as well as the pure desire to return to the origin – the desire for direct experience of the center of consciousness.

Near the beginning of Lecture 1, Swami Rama says:  *"When you were born and came to this world there was nothing.  You did not have anything.  When you leave this platform you don't carry anything with you.  You don't have to claim anything that this is mine.  So those who renounce that concept that this is mine, this is mine, this is mine, they are called renunciates.  But the people who live in the world as householders are not inferior to those who have renounced.  Why they are considered to be higher?  Because they have ample time to attain their goal, while the people, householders, do not have enough time.  They get busy, they distorted, they get dissipated in the external world.  Their desires are 99% mundane desires.  While renunciates desire 99% are desires for emancipation.  The both have desires, one desire is totally for emancipation, another desires to have worldly pleasures, worldly gains, worldly attainments.  So householders should not be lost in the world, forgetting their goal, because goal of the renunciates and monks and goal of householders, common people is one and the same.  They are not different.  We all need enlightenment.  We all need to attain the goal of life.  What is that goal of life?  You often say God.  But when you study scriptures, you finally come to conclusion that doesn't make any sense.  You need to attain a state of peace, happiness and bliss.  And if you have attained this happiness and bliss, then that is called God.  If not, then you are worshipping, adoring a god who is not God.*"



Self Portrait as a Fish 1977.  Porcelain, fiberglass 20 X 80 in.

**V.81**
**Your father Himavat, King of the Mountain, cut off his own foothill flanks**
**To give You as dowry when You were married.**
**Now Your flanks surpass anything the mountains can offer.**

Lower knowledge and higher knowledge. The physical and the sublime. Knowing the physical makes it possible to know the divine. Knowing the divine makes it possible to see the physical without distortion. And ultimately, leads to the knowledge that there is no difference.

There are so many paths leading to the center of consciousness, so many schools for the Seeker to join. All prescribed paths move from complicated to simple. There are so many practices available to help remove the veils that mask reality. Each Seeker has different issues on many levels, from sitting comfortably to dissolving deep-seated habits of the mind. The Himalayan Tradition as taught by Swami Rama makes use of three philosophies and their practices: Eight Rung Yoga as codified by Patanjali in *The Yoga Sutras* which leads to Samadhi, Advaita Vedanta which involves contemplation, and Shri Vidya Samaya Tantra which leads to the state of Turiya, being in the world and yet above it. There is a natural progression that is followed, depending on the capacity of the Seeker and the direct experience of the Teacher.

We live in a universe that operates with two basic forces: expansion and contraction. Every decision we make, every step we take, every thought that occurs is either expansive or contractive. Ahamkara (Ego in the sense of "I am") can either contract to the small "I" which is stuck in repetitive habit patterns without even knowing it, or expand to include all that exists in the realm of the mind and beyond – direct experience of "That I am". Expansion automatically goes beyond attachment. Attachment creates the walls of the box that we believe is all there is. Meditation, by exposing the false reality of these walls, gives us a choice to get out of the box or not. Fear of expansion into the unknown keeps us attached to the box, and hinders meditation. When we examine our fears carefully, we find that they are all based on past memories which no longer have any reality, or fantasies of a projected future, which also have no reality except in the limited mind. We have to dissolve a barrier to know this, which is why regular, daily meditation practice is so important. When fears dissolve, what's left is unconditional love. Where else could expansion lead us?

23 min. into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"There was a debate in our monastery once -- when we follow the Vedantic principle why should we follow Yoga? My master said Yoga path should be followed and when you've accomplished whatever Yoga teaches you, then you follow Vedanta. Without disciplining yourself, without equipping yourself, if you follow Vedanta you are not able to assimilate. It's just like drinking finest wine through a dirty paper cup."*

**V.82**
**Your thighs put to shame the trunks of elephants,**
**Not to mention the golden trunks of banana trees.**
**You are such a devoted queen that**
**After countless prostrations to Your consort Shiva**
**Your knees**
**Are round and polished, like the forehead domes**
**Of Indra's elephant.**

The mythical elephant Airavata is the mount of Indra, Ruler of Heaven. He has four tusks, was another product of the churning of the sea of milk, and resembles Mt. Kailash where Shiva likes to sit. We've seen the frontal globes of elephants compared to breasts, as well.

Practice leads to mastery. What is mastery? It is when practice becomes automatic, without thought, a habit. Before meditation is possible, the babble of the conscious mind (I forgot to do… I wonder if… She said….) has to dissolve. The Seeker, lost in the train



Cup 2007. Porcelain 4 in.

of thoughts, regains concentration, focuses on Guru Chakra, and offers the whole train to the light of higher knowledge. This practice is very useful after sitting to meditate. It invites all the active thoughts of the conscious mind to come forward, be examined and offered to the fire of higher knowledge. This clears the way to go deeper through the layers of dreaming sleep, deep sleep and beyond.

About 1hr20min into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: "*After you have learned how to sit, you come with your mind. First ask your mind to sit here [points to Ajna Chakra, between the eyebrows]. Anything that comes offer it to the fire of knowledge. Now suppose I have stolen something, no one knows. And I feel guilty that I should not have stolen that. That thought comes while you are sitting in meditation, then you are not fit for meditation. Suppose such a thought comes, offer that thought to the fire of knowledge [at Guru Chakra, a thumb's width above Ajna Chakra]. You have offered it to others – once you give something to somebody, you don't say "give it back". You don't say that. One after another, you offer all the thoughts that come to you, offer to the fire of knowledge. This way, if that thought which you have offered up comes to you, it will not come in ugly form and you can say but I already offered you to the fire. Why are you coming to me again? From where? Oh it's not really thought, it's just a simple memory. It's like a rope that has tied you, it has burned, it has no power to tie, but it leaves its ashes. This way you can remove, you can be free of your negativity. Then you have confidence I have offered all such thoughts, offered all oblations to this fire. In this mentally first thing is to evoke guru chakra, this fire of knowledge. And then offer all the thoughts. There are three main layers of thoughts in your mind: deeply bedded, which you are not aware of, latent, which you can awaken according to the situation, and there are day to day thoughts. It's very easy to get rid of all these thoughts and go beyond the mire of thoughts."*



Serpent Hole 2007.  Stoneware 6 ft.  Coll. Dick and Ester Cogswell

**V.83**
**Daughter of the Mountain!  Kama has used Your shanks**
**As quivers to double the number of his five arrows,**
**The better to surrender to Shiva.  Arrowheads are your toenails,**
**Arrowheads sharpened on the heads of prostrate deities!**

The awareness of senses makes it possible to go beyond the senses, beyond the idea of gods, surrendering all to Shiva.

Kama, the god of desire that rules the ten senses (5 karmendriyas – outward going eliminating, procreating or multiplying, moving, grasping, speaking; 5 jnanendriyas – inward going smelling, tasting, touching, seeing, hearing) has used Her lower legs as arrow quivers.  The arrowheads/toenails are sharpened on deity heads, as they bow down to honor Her supremacy.  The Seeker sits still and serene, beyond the grasp of the senses.  This is not to eliminate the senses, but not to be disturbed by them.  If a dog barks outside your window all night, do you listen to it?  There is a choice not to listen, but it requires practice.  Observe your listening.  Are you disturbed during the barking? How about during the pauses between barking?  If there's no barking, why are you disturbed by the absence of barking?

About 34 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says:  *"Vidya means knowledge, but there is something called avidya too, -- absence of knowledge.  First step: anything we can perceive through our senses, and then we try to conceptualize, that is not knowledge, right knowledge.  Because your mind is clouded and your mind has employed ten senses which you are using in the external world, that clouded owner of the ten senses, master, misleads you and whole life you remain in a world of fantasy.  And never come in touch with the reality.  Therefore that is not considered to be knowledge.  Knowledge through senses is not perfect.  It's partial knowledge."*



Smoked Salmon 2000.  Stoneware 6 ft.

**V.84**
**Your two feet are the crown of the Vedas.**
**May You place them on my head, too.**
**Washed in the water offering that flows down**
**Through Shiva's matted hair to form the Ganga,**
**They are the bright red glow of the jewels on Vishnu's crown.**

Learning correct diaphragmatic breathing is necessary preparation for meditation, and important for physical and mental health. Why? It is the most efficient way to breath, requiring only the diaphragm muscle (and a few associated muscles). It massages the heart. It can be done without pause between inhale/exhale, exhale/inhale. Pause in breathing creates a physical and mental jerk, which prevents concentration. The "two feet" of prana are ida and pingala nadis, the left and right channels, which need to be balanced so that all prana is concentrated in Sushumna Nadi, the central channel.

Remember that the breath is the bridge between body and mind, and affects both. We begin life with a full yogic breath and a cry, then we settle into automatic diaphragmatic breathing. The shocks and desires of growing up often turn us into chest breathers, abdominal breathers or even paradoxical breathers! Correct diaphragmatic breathing should be learned from a competent teacher. If not possible, try "crocodile" pose, or makarasana. It locks the upper chest and the abdomen, so that the only possible way to breathe is diaphragmatically. The challenge is to learn this and then do it throughout the day, sitting, walking, talking. Regular practice leads to mastery, when diaphragmatic breath is automatic.

Shiva and Vishnu bow down at Her feet. "Two Feet" have multi-leveled meanings; here I see them as relating to Ajna chakra – between the eyebrows. They can be interpreted as the two wings that represent the final stage of duality to be transcended by piercing the bindu that is the central circle. Devotees make water offerings, which are compared to the standard iconography of Shiva which shows him with the goddess Ganga in his hair, the source of the great river. The red powder that is another standard offering is compared to the jewels that Vishnu wears, reflecting the crimson color that symbolizes Shakti.

The Seeker goes to the heart of these symbols, remembering that symbols cannot be exhausted by words, only by silence.

About 45 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"When you learn something about yourself, teacher says you are talking about only this small figure you are not talking about the universe. [i.e. lower, worldly knowledge] Then he imparts the knowledge of microcosm and macrocosm. Pinda and Brahman. Pinda is this body, and Brahman is the universe. What is the difference between a drop of water and the ocean? They are qualitatively one and the same. But they are not quantitatively the same. Once you understand the summum bonum of your life, the very distance of this life, this individual, which is not body, which is not breath, not at all senses, which is not your thinking process including your emotions, appetites and inclinations. Which is beyond this. …. Beyond means the senses are beyond your body, the mind is beyond your senses, the soul is beyond your mind. So within the whole concept changes."*



Reclining Buddha feet, Yangon, Myanmar

**V.85**
**Again we sing praises to Your feet, brilliant with crimson paste,**
**Your consort Shiva is jealous of the kicks You give**
**To the Ashoka trees in Your pleasure garden,**
**Wishing that You would give him as much attention.**

Ashoka trees in the springtime are considered to be pregnant, but are said to bloom only when kicked by a beautiful young woman. Shiva, in his form of Lord of the Animals -- Pashupati -- is disappointed that she puts so much effort into trees, when she could be beyond trees with him. Crimson is the color of Tripura Sundari. The Seeker, exhausted at the end of human effort, prays to be kicked once more to know Her.

The practice contained in Saundaryalahari is a systematic way of purifying and concentrating the mind, so that attention can rest in Ajna chakra, between the eyebrows. The symbol for Ajna is a small circle with two “wings”, or two “feet”, an expression of unevolved duality – duality without attributes such as form, color, etc. We are unevolved when we first enter the manifest world, and we return to that basic duality when we are ready to return. The Seeker is attracted to shapes and colors in Her pleasure garden, even Shri Yantra. Recognizing these attractive lights as obstacles, the Seeker concentrates on the small circle between Her feet, entry point to the source of light. Attention has to rest in order to go beyond, because attention itself is a desire.

About 1hr 40min into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *“And the center is Ajna chakra here [between the eyebrows]. After you have done this [internal] worship, you have organized your emotional body; when emotional body no more disturbs the lake of mind, or life, then we give the next step and that is called Ajna chakra. [Draws the symbol on chalkboard] You’ll see all geometrical figures. It’s easy to keep your mind busy on [square], it’s easy to keep your mind within [triangle], it’s easy to keep your mind in this figure, but mind refuses to be in a circle. Does not want to be in a circle. Does not want to be disciplined. Human nature is not to be disciplined, Human in human wants to be disciplined, because he has knowledge of the absolute. At least he can have a glimpse. You are a compound of three: animal, human and divine.”*



**V. 86**
**In a love quarrel, You kicked Shiva's forehead**
**When he called You Ganga by mistake.**
**Your ankle bracelets jingled joyously,**
**Shaken by Desire in delight at his revenge.**

She kicks again! Anyone who has a spiritual practice knows that it can get stuck. She is there to remove obstacles. Sometimes a realized Guru may play the role of kicker if the Seeker is ready. This is called Shaktipat. When? Readiness means that most of the mental constructs that prevent clarity have been dissolved by practice and questioning. Those obstacles are called Samskaras or conditionings – meaning well-worn tracks in the mind that veil our vision. External experiences bring up old mind tracks that discolor the present and keep us stuck in past patterns that are not helpful. The modern example of conditioning is the dog that is trained to associate a ringing bell with getting food. When the bell rings but there is no food, the dog still salivates – that is a Samskara in action. When we start meditating and contemplating, we begin to catch these patterns as they arise, and can replace them with useful habits (such as regular meditation).

A classic example of conditioned response is "mistaking the rope for a snake", when walking along at dusk. To make this mistake, you need to have experienced both a rope and a snake. And you have to make a mistake of perception – the snake Samskara is stronger than the rope Samskara. But don't start thinking that all Samskaras are

obstacles – recognizing the rope as a rope also requires a memory.  When we forget our eternal nature, that is just another mistake of perception.

The Seeker remembers not to get hung up on perfect purity.  Examining conditioning weakens Samskaras so they no longer obscure clarity.  Conditionings can be trained to sit quietly out of sight and not disturb.

Shiva carries the goddess Ganga on his head, and her waters flow down his hair.  They are the causal waters of ritual purification.  Kama (desire) is delighted that Shiva gets a kick, hoping He will wake up to the realization that he cannot be separate from Shakti. The Seeker reads words, aiming to go beyond words, concentrates on the tiny circle between the eyebrows.  In verse 85, the Seeker was still stalled in the forest of thoughts. Now the Seeker is very close to Her.

About 13 min. into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says:  *"… we forget that there is someone eternal seated within us who is our real friend.  We forget that.  A constantly present friend within you.  I'm going to make you aware of that presence, that friend within you.  You need real closeness and that's the third path called Samaya; I am with you".  When you have this awareness that the lord is with me, the lord of life is with me, then there will be no fear.  Fear of what?   It [fear] has only two reasons:  of losing what you have, and of not gaining what you want.  And you all are afraid of your bodies because mind nobody can take. It's such a dirty thing nobody wants [it]."*



**V.87**
**Your lotus feet imprint the snowy slopes,**
**Shower richness on Your devotees day and night,**
**Superior to the lotus of Laxmi, which perishes in snow,**
**Closes at night, and brings only temporary wealth.**

The Seeker basks in Her lap, with Sushumna, the central channel open to Ajna chakra, between the eyebrows. What does "open" mean? Simply, no obstacles disturb. The Seeker knows the Absolute in the Relative world throughout the day and night. She is in everything, not separate from Shiva.

Laxmi exists in the relative world of symbols, and cannot provide ultimate knowledge. The lotus closes at night and only blooms in relative conditions. The Seeker recognizes Laxmi as a symbol to be transcended, enjoys the kaleidoscope of images, goes inside to the temple of the body and knows only Her. Even the gods are mortal.

About 37 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"…a student of Shree Vidya can go to synagogue, temple, church, Shiva temple, Krishna temple, anywhere, it doesn't matter. For him and her, everything is one and the same. It's not the worship of a woman, mother, it's not worship of man, father. It's the worship of Brahman. Not even worship of neuter gender. [It is worship of] the absolute truth which is changeless. Which is not subject to change, death and decay. That which is limitless; that infinite for which we do not have words, which is beyond explication. What cannot be explained, what is inexplicable. … your body is a shrine.*

*First point: the teacher says you can visit any place. [The] external world inspires you. Anything in the external world, even teacher, will inspire you. Scriptures will inspire you, lectures will inspire you, listening to the tapes will inspire you, but that is not enough. Suppose you are inspired, what do you do next? It means you should be able to use your potencies, potentials for the next step ...[Sanskrit which I won't attempt to transcribe] You are the shrine of the lord. That awareness is developed. If you want to worship, don't go here and there. .... So first awareness is: the greatest of all dwells within me. (Puts both hands over heart) This awareness is developed. It's not easy. Once you have developed this awareness, fifty per cent of the job is completed. The teacher says the lord is within you. Don't search for the lord outside you. It is everywhere. It is within you. How can you be excluded? Again and again teacher creates that awareness, strengthens that awareness that lord of life and the universe are one and the same and the lord dwells in you….and where you find a temple or shrine, that is called church. Don't ignore this house of god…"*



Thorung La Pass, Nepal 1979.  This was my first trip to Nepal, around the Annapurna circuit in reverse during the August monsoon.  Heavy rains, floods, injuries, you name it.  At the top of the pass, sounds of avalanches and uplifting mountains.

**V.88**
**The soft curve of Your tender foot, Devi,**
**How could poets compare it to tough tortoise shell?**
**And how could the Wrecker of Cities, with His compassionate heart,**
**During Your marriage ceremony,**
**Take such a tender thing and place it on a rough granite millstone?**

Spiritual practice can be likened to grinding flour. We begin with whole grain that hides secrets under its husk. Whole grain cannot be digested without grinding. As we practice meditation and contemplation, we progress from the physical world to the subtle world in all its gradations, and beyond. That is the marriage of Shiva and Shakti -- Positive and Negative, seeming opposites -- who were only separate in the mistaken perception of our minds.

In the poetry of India, it is common to compare the top of a woman's foot to a tortoise shell. In the traditional marriage, part of the ceremony is for the groom (Shiva: here called "Wrecker of cities") to place the bride's foot on top of the flour grinding stone (jaanto), which is a fixture in every village house, a symbol of nourishment. The Seeker contemplates the three cities of waking, dreaming and sleeping and surrenders them all to Shiva and Shakti, only seemingly separated, always united at the still point in the center of the millstone -- the fourth state: Turiya.

About 1hr 8min into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"…they translate 'Samaya' as 'I am with you, constantly with you'. This is the aim of Samaya marg [path]. When you are constantly aware of the lord you have accomplished something. So your body is chakra. You have to learn to go to that point where Shiva and Shakti are one, where there is no distinction of male and female concept, soul has no gender. God has no gender. You cannot say god is man [male]. Man has written books so man calls him 'him, him'. Woman says 'she, she, she'. But it is beyond all these genders."*

There are three schools of tantra: Kaula, Mishra and Samaya. In the tradition taught by Swami Rama, Samaya is followed, and is considered to be the highest form of tantra. Its practices are all internal; there are no external rituals as in Kaula. "Saundaryalahari", when the key to its symbolism is revealed, is a guide to the practices that lead the Seeker through the center of consciousness.



**V.89**
**Oh Chandi, Your feet with moon-shaped nails**
**Inspire adoring damsels to join their hands like lotus flowers**
**In the moonlight.**
**They dance with the heavenly wish-fulfilling Kalpadruma trees**
**Whose open hands first grace the humble and poor,**
**Ignoring the affluent.**

Chandi is another name for the form of divine energy that is so intense it means "wrathful". Durga, the female goddess who rides a tiger and cuts through illusion with her sword, is another version of this name. Only the humble can transcend Ahamkara ("ego"). The Seeker prays; surrenders; the veils that hide reality drop away.

Internal dialogue is a very useful practice for understanding the mind, by having a conversation with it. How to do it? A good time is when you sit for meditation. After the body and breath are stable, say "Namaste" to your mind. Then ask your mind to help you, and tell it how to help you. For example: "Mind, be quiet today."

At the beginning of Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: *"When you are praying, you have to be humble. Being humble means learning to compose yourself. 'Oh lord of life, o my inner dweller, all that who gives me light, the truth gives me power to hear, think, analyze. Who gives me power, energy to walk, to do things in the external world, oh that center of power within me. Let me draw strength directly from you….' You are the whole source of strength. This way you can pray in your own language. It means constant awareness. Who is praying to whom? You are training your mind and a particular part of your mind that is called your Ego. You are making your Ego aware of this truth. Otherwise ego refuses to accept that. If you really want to be humble, and you want to enjoy life, you'll have to change your Ego. Now make a picture in your mind when you do this, when you go to internal dialogue, a few minutes every day.*



Cup 2007. Porcelain 4 in.

*Don't say you don't have time.  You have enough time, ample time."*

**V.90**
**Your feet bloom a bouquet of celestial flowers**
**Dripping nectar, sweet wealth for Your hungry devotees.**
**I wish my consciousness with its six organs of perception**
**Would become a six-legged bee, ever sucking at Your bouquet.**

The six organs are sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, plus mind. The Seeker is intoxicated by Her when attention rests at Soma Chakra, slightly above Ajna Chakra (between the eyebrows). Intoxication is attractive, but eventually is recognized as yet another diversion from "as it is": living in the world while rising above it. Rising above the world but not living in it is not a helpful state. The desire for intoxication prevents spiritual progress. Although She is beyond name and form, She shines in the form of light through all we perceive.

"Soma" is a psychedelic substance, sometimes taken by yogis. Swami Rama says: "After a careful study of the use of psychedelic preparations over a number of years I have concluded that the harm they can do far outweighs any positive benefits they might have. Those who are not psychologically prepared will have negative experiences either when they ingest the intoxicant or later. Those who are prepared don't need such drugs." – *Living with the Himalayan Masters*

At the end of Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"Soma wine… there's so much literature in the Vedas about it. But the yogis say you don't have to go anywhere outside, you have soma inside. They tap Soma chakra, they get that divine intoxication. Whatever they experience here [Soma chakra], they get intoxicated and remain in that intoxication all day [spinning his forefinger at his temple], and that's why ordinary people in India -- such people say 'this man is crazy'. But he's in his meditation all the time. You meet many people [who] are not understood by others. Because they enjoy their soma intoxication. Soma. What that Soma does is constant awareness and in Soma you are constantly aware -- you don't think anything -- that intoxication is like that. But this Vidya is not attainable without the help of a competent teacher who has already done this."*



Driveby (detail).   Coll. Dick and Ester Cogswell

**V.91**
**As Your lotus feet float along the path, Your swans follow,**
**Attentively learning Your graceful way of moving,**
**Correcting their faults by listening to the instructions**
**From Your jeweled ankle bells, jingling with Your elegant gait.**

As we deepen our practice and remove the mirages that distort our wisdom mind, we become open to intuitive wisdom and its accompanying power to discriminate between what is useful and what is not useful. That small inner voice of wisdom can be heard clearly, and we are enabled to replace stuck patterns of behavior with useful habits.

Brahma, the creator, rides on the swan-of-knowledge. As mentioned in V.38, swans represent the power of discrimination, and are said to have the ability to separate milk from water. They are painted floating on the lucid lake of consciousness, one on each side of a lotus flower. Going beyond the attractions of the external world, the Seeker listens only to the small inner voice of wisdom, and minds Her words only.

About 18 min. into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"The day you are the owner of your mind, master of your mind, then you give. That is called self-surrender. Otherwise it is just … unauthorized giving. So such a mind which does not know how to follow, how to be directed, how to be orderly. Such a mind needs a particular method so that mind goes that way, flows that way. Anyone who thinks that mind can stop and one can stop thinking, that's not right method. Mind should be taught where to flow, which way to flow, how its energy can be used. And that particular method is best of the methods where you allow your mind to flow consciously and that is useful method. Body is yours and it's a good instrument, …. senses are yours, breath is yours, it's only one thing alien which is mind which does not cooperate. How to establish friendship with that alien?"*



Vishnu Schist (detail) 2004.  Stoneware.

**V.92**
**Your servants, the top gods Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Ishvara --**
**Serve as the four legs of your bed to support You,**
**While Sadashiva inhabits the white of Your bed sheet,**
**He reflects Your crimson brightness**
**As if he were eroticism incarnate.**

Always cutting to the essence, Zen Master Seung Sahn says: "An eminent teacher said, 'Your mind is complete. You are complete. Everything is complete. So each thing already has it.' So, moment to moment to moment, if you keep your correct opinion, your correct condition, and your correct situation, the name for that is clear mind. If you keep clear mind, you are already complete, and the truth, and a great Bodhisattva, and Big Love."

The road begins in simplicity, winds around through complication, ends in simplicity. Having made the journey, we rest in simplicity, as it is, free of desires. No need to read the rest of this.

This verse describes the three gunas (primary tendencies that are behind mind and matter) and the unity behind them:

Brahma as creator is Rajas or Movement, and creates all the stuff of the perceptible world, Maya.

Vishnu as Sattva or Preservation, is portrayed sleeping on a thousand-headed serpent named Shesa, or "Remainder". Remainder of what? -- the dream of the universe that had to dissolve before this one could be created.

Shiva as Tamas or Dissolution, then has the necessary role of transforming excess matter into ashes, completing the birth, life, death cycle. And the play of life begins and ends again and again.

Sadashiva is the primal Shiva, beyond the three gunas, usually described as crystal clear. Here he has taken on Sattva guna – white – just in order to reflect Her crimson color. Shiva and Shakti were never separated.

The Seeker reads these words, contemplates, dissolves words into silence.



**Garden Bench, 2006. Stoneware 4ft. L. c. Jim Danisch**

**V.93**
**The world spins, held in balance by Her glory.**
**Shiva's Shakti is all of grace, all of beauty,**
**With her curly cascades of hair,**
**With her natural smile,**
**With her soft heart like the crimson lust-inspiring Sirisa flower,**
**Her breasts as firm as a stone pestle in the kitchen,**
**Her slender waist,**
**Her ample shoulders and hips.**

Shambu is another name of Shiva, meaning "abode-of-joy". From beyond name and form in Turiya, She overflows with beauty in every part of the perceived world, in every state of consciousness – waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Formless, She fills every form. Her beauty erupts from the darkness of the latent unconscious. The Seeker's body sits in Her apparitional light; the Seeker's mind abides in complete darkness, the abyss of bliss, the end of the mind, form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

From the teaching letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn: "Recently I held a two-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. for a group of lay Christians, ministers, and monks. During interviews I asked each one, "Where are you coming from?" "Washington." "Whose hand is this?" "Mine." "Whose leg is this?" "Mine." "Your body comes from Washington, but I'm asking you, not your body. Where does your true self come from?" "God." Everyone answered, "God," so I said, "Yah, you are correct, but I ask you, where is God?" "Everywhere." Some answered, "Everywhere," some could not answer. All the ministers answered, "Everywhere." So I said, "Then is God in your mind or outside your mind?" Very difficult! "If you say God is inside your mind, then I say, Oh, this God is very small! If you say God is outside your mind, then I ask you, Are God and your mind the same or different? If you say they are the same, I will hit you. If you say they are different, I will also hit you." Everyone stops, no one can answer.

"Don't know. This is correct."

Swami Rama was critical of Zen, saying that Zen had the goal of "No mind". Mind doesn't go away. This may have been an error of words: "Don't know mind" is very different – it corresponds to what in Yoga philosophy is called unconditioned mind, mind without influence of samskaras, mind that lives in the present moment.



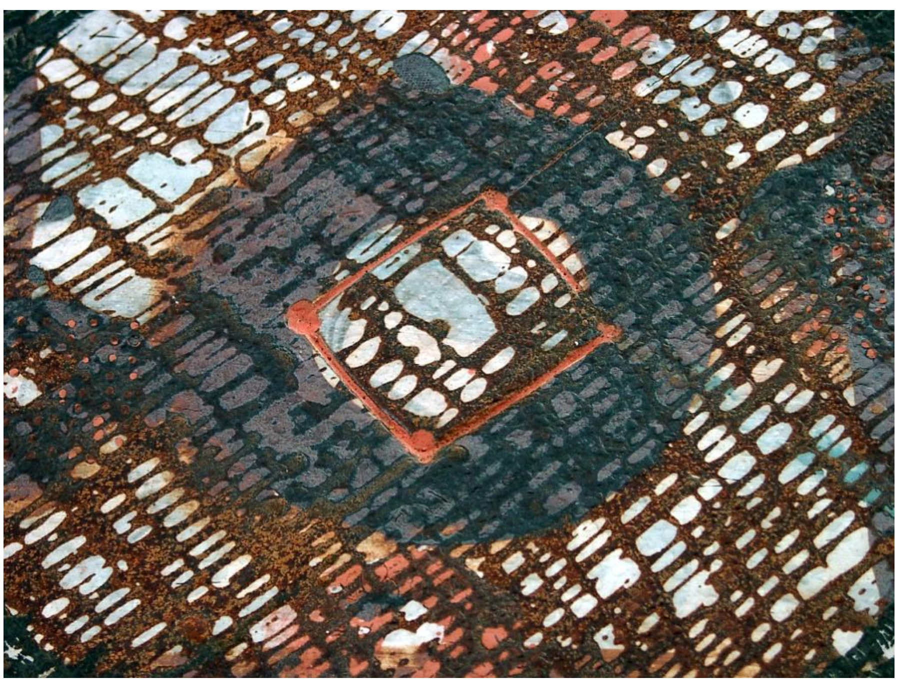
Three Gunas wth Lightning 2003.  Porcelain 22 in.

**V.94**
**The moon appears,**
**an emerald basin holding sixteen slices of cool, white camphor,**
**Watery perfume for Your feet.**
**When emptied by Your worship, Brahma fills it again**
**With the sixteen digits of the waxing moon.**

The waning and waxing moon is the inspiration for the poet, a moving symbol of Her power as evident in the changes of moon phase, changes of season, changes of mind. Whatever is emptied, whatever dies, whatever sleeps – fills, reincarnates, wakes once more. What cannot be emptied? What cannot be filled? What does not die?

Camphor is used to perfume water, and the moon is associated with cooling/water energy. Another name for Tripura Sundari is Sodashi, the Girl-of-Sixteen; esoterically the mantra of sixteen syllables that is used in conjunction with the Shri Yantra. The Seeker sits, contemplates the body that sits, opens internal dialogue in the mind.

About 25 min. into Lecture 4, Swami Rama says: *"What questions should be asked in [internal dialogue?]. The internal has a first question 'Ko aham'?, 'Who am I'? First -- Am I body alone which is subject to change, death and decay? Am I born at the mercy of matter? Am I just a heap, a lump, a miserable lump of matter? Is there anything beyond that? First you analyze that body -- your greatest friend. To whom you depend so much. Expect so much from the body, waste so much time and energy, devote so much time and energy. If you know that it changes, and it goes to decay…, Now, I'm a breathing being too. Suppose I don't keep breathing? Can I live? No, body cannot be retained. So as I am a physical being, I'm a breathing being too. Then I think… I'm a thinking being too. It's beyond my breath. Then I reason: the finest part of reasoning, thinking highly, by discriminating what is right and what is wrong. This process is called dialogue. Then is my mind everything? All that speaks of my internal states? No. So I'm beyond this. Am I affected by my mind? Yes, because I identify myself with my mind. My mind is identifying itself with the objects of the world. That's why it's unhappy. You see…. When you understand that you are full of bliss, peace and happiness… that's your nature… then you no more identify yourself with your mind. This dialogue will bring awareness."*



With this awareness, past and future drop away. A-U-M-----

**V.95**
**Consort of the Destroyer of Cities, You live in his inner circle.**
**Unstable minds are unable to worship Your feet.**
**All of the deities – even Indra – with all their austerities,**
**are no more than Your gate keepers.**
**Gods are impermanent, along with their special powers.**
**Few are the Seekers who can worship You in Sahasrara.**

The preliminary exercises and practices of Patanjali Yoga are done in order to stabilize the mind and train it to tranquility. Until the mind is one-pointed, She will remain clouded. It is difficult to move past the gate keepers – getting stuck in the god realms may seem like glory at first, but soon is recognized as yet another obstacle to crystalline clarity. Special powers are very attractive, but keep the Seeker mired in the lower realms of the subtle body. Worshipping in Sahasrara is worshipping the Now, as it is, no questions, no movement, no observer and no object of observation.



Tall Jar 2001. Porcelain 16 in.

When sitting to meditate, it is important to clear the disturbance of the conscious mind so that the subtle mind can be accessed. After stretching, sitting and coming to the circular breath, take as much time as necessary to say "Namaste" and have a conversation with the mind. Go to Guru Chakra, about one thumb width above Ajna Chakra between the eyebrows. Ask questions and listen to the quiet, calm, small inner voice of Buddhi, the wisdom voice.

At the end of Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: *"there is another chakra between ajna and sahasrara, and that's called —guru chakra, jnana chakra. Now, you'll find this point [Muladhara Chakra] flows downward, and that [Anahata Chakra and above] flows upwards. It's a flame of knowledge that flows upwards. And this [lack of knowledge] flows downward. Shakti's trend in human body is downward—because I explained to you—Kundalini remains coiled in a dormant form, and has slipped from her own abode because she is drunk. She drinks the best of the nectar that flows from Brahmarandhra and that's why we are crude. When we stop her from doing that, she awakes."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn says: "Together action" means, "my opinion," "my condition," "my situation" disappear. Then, moment to moment, keeping clear mind is possible. If you keep clear mind, then correct opinion, correct condition,

correct situation appear. When you see the sky, it is blue. When you see the tree, it is green. When you are hungry, eat; when you are tired, sleep. Everything, just like this, is the truth."

**V.96**
**You are the definition of unblemished.**
**Many poets have courted and reached Saraswati;**
**And those with wealth easily attain closeness to Laxmi.**
**But not even the Kuravaka tree enjoys the embrace of Your breasts,**
**Which belong to Shiva only.**

The goddesses Saraswati (origin of poetry) and Laxmi (origin of wealth, both spiritual and material) have compromised their purity by contact with poets and the wealthy.  The Kuravaka tree is supposed to flower only when embraced by a beautiful woman, but cannot embrace pure Shakti.  Shiva and Shakti have never been apart.  Duality is the grand illusion.

A-U-M-      .  "A" is spoken with open mouth in waking state.  As the mouth slowly closes, automatically "U" arises – dreaming sleep, between external and internal awareness.  When the lips close, "M" remains – deep sleep.  When "M" fades away, only silence remains – the mind knows nothing, rests in the Now.

About 54 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says:  *"We are very close to mother.  I am talking about Divine Mother, the Mother in you, the Shakti in you, the power in you.  Science has proved that matter is energy.  Matter can be converted into energy and energy into matter.  But that's all, nothing beyond that.  Yogic science has gone to deeper level, explaining that you have Shakti within you.  And without that Shakti it is not possible for you to survive, it is not possible for you to function [in] any part of yourself, even your brain, your mind, your visualizations, your actions -- are not possible without Shakti.  This systematic path, loving path, most glorious, majestic path is introduced by the teachers when you have enough time….*

*So this Vidya; there is a book called "Saundaryalahari", a Wave of Beauty, a Wave of Bliss, a Wave of Wisdom.  So this mother worship is not worship of female deity, it is not accepting only dichotomy or trichotomy, it is systematically leading to the source of highest consciousness within you where you find unification with Brahman, the absolute one."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn says:  "If you cut off all thinking, you wake up. If you keep a thinking mind, this is a dream. Waking up from this dream is more difficult than waking up from an ordinary dream, so you must wake up. You must wake up!"



**Spring 2008, Cook Ridge.  Burmese Buddha offerings from Nepal**

**V.97**

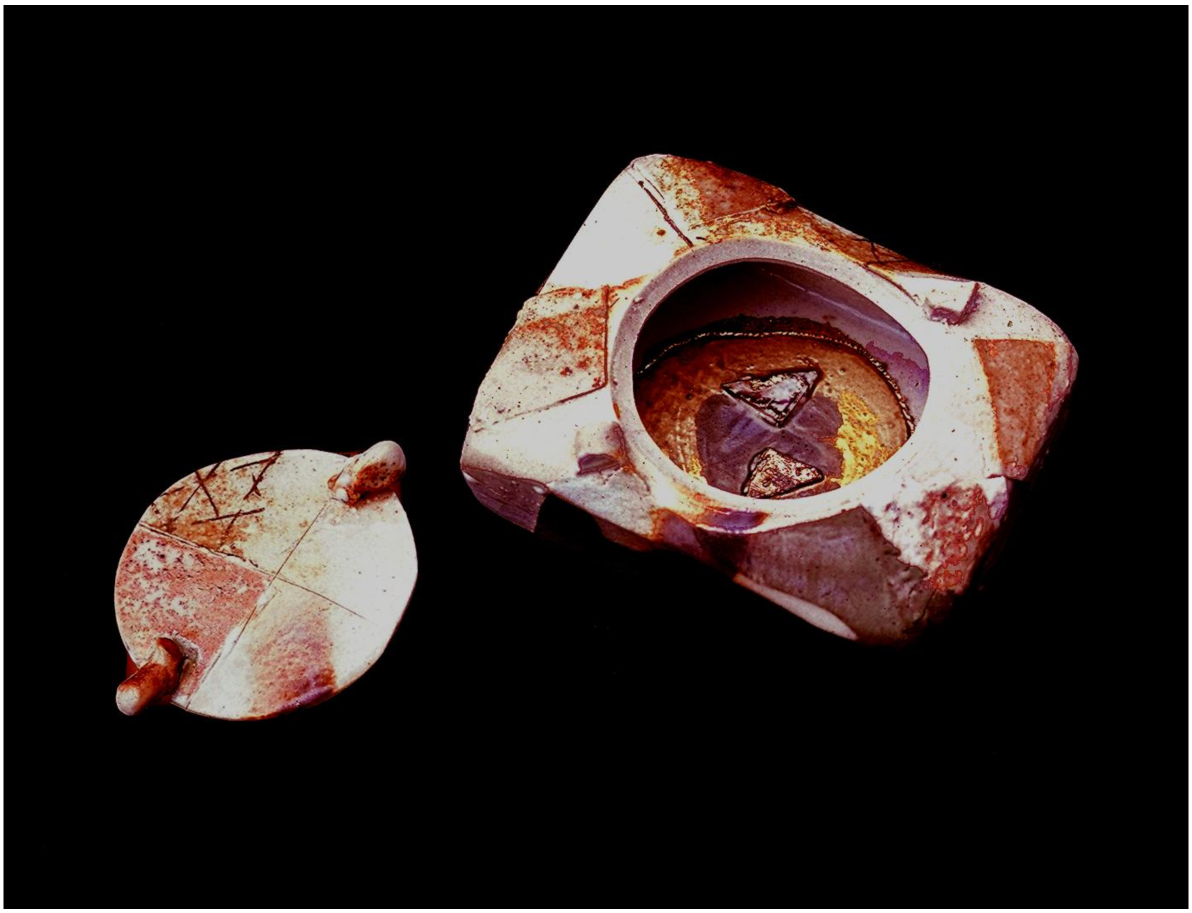
**Consort of Parabrahman! Those who know the inner meaning of the words**
**Call You Saraswati, Goddess of Learning and consort of Brahma.**
**Or they call You Lotus-born Laxmi, consort of Vishnu.**
**Or Daughter of the Mountain, consort of Shiva.**
**But how many of them know You as Turiya, the fourth unique state**
**That is the source of those three? The indescribable Maha-Maya who**
**Causes the world to turn.**

Parabrahman is the highest, most indescribable form of the Absolute. Those who only know the scriptures may understand the highest as a deity with name and form such as Saraswati or Laxmi, that exist in the conscious mind. But to find the source requires going beyond the mind. Few seekers are willing to commit to the necessary practice to train the mind to go beyond itself. But there are many who have gotten a glimpse, recognized or not recognized at the time. Some retreat in fear, some are opened permanently.

This begins with training body, breath and mind to go to silence. After learning to sit still and comfortable, the Seeker learns to regulate the breath to eliminate any pause between inhale and exhale, exhale and inhale. Pauses or jerks in the breath create disturbance in the mind, so that meditation is not possible. Preliminary practices which facilitate this circular breathing are breathing exercises such as nadi shodanum (alternate nostril breathing), kapala bhati and bhastrika. In the beginning they are done with the body; with practice they are done with the mind alone – that is the definition of pranayama. Eventually, these exercises will lead to control of prana. Learning to make the breath "circular" and continuous, without pause between inhale and exhale, will lead to kumbhaka without effort (kevala kumbhaka), where consciousness of breathing ceases and there remains only a still field of prana. The obstacle of the mind recedes through waking, dreaming and sleeping states until it rests in now, as it is. Practice is the preparation for an event that happens spontaneously, that cannot be predicted by the limited mind.

About 1hr. 22 min. into Lecture 2, Swami Rama says: *"If I exhale and never inhale I'm dead. If I inhale and never exhale I'm dead. Pause means death. If you know how to annihilate pause you're free. You have gone beyond death. These exercises are preliminary exercises, important exercises for going beyond, for creating special culture to your mind, for creating, culturing your mind so that your mind is not this mind, because this mind at present is not capable to go beyond -- but that mind which is cultivated has potentiality to go deep, to go to deeper levels of your being. A time comes when the boat says you have crossed the river. You go ahead. You don't carry boat with you. So your mind, such a mind, becomes a boat which helps you to go beyond. Do exercises. This cannot happen if you do not practice."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn says: "Somebody said that the primary point is mind, Buddha, God, energy, nature, substance, the absolute, and everything. The true primary point has no name and no form, no speech and no words because it is before thinking. If you open your mouth, you are wrong. So, I say to you, don't make "don't know", don't make "enthusiasm". Only go straight—what are you?"



Box with lid 1974.  Porcelain 3.5 in.

**V.98**
**How long do I have to wait, Mother?  I'm a sincere seeker of wisdom**
**And want nothing more than to drink the water used for washing**
**Your feet, so crimson that it can inspire poetry in a moron.**
**When can I hope for that crimson water to flow from my mouth**
**Like betel juice from the mouth of Saraswati?**

In India, feet that walk in the filth of the world are unclean, unless they are the feet of an enlightened being; then they are worshipped.  In India, women's feet are often painted with red, so when they are washed the water turns crimson.  Spitting betel juice is not ordinarily an inspiring image, until it is associated with poetry in the mouth of Divine Mother (Saraswati is Her energy that is associated with poetry).

About 1hr 4min. into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says:  *"How do you attain understanding? You need to practice for that.  You understand something.  You understand the sun shines with such a big light, you understand the moon shines, you understand in the far distance there is water and you are thirsty, but you cannot get there.     Practice is needed.  And that practice should be concrete, profound. Know what you are doing.  Do not do if you do not know what you are doing.  It will be a waste of time.  It is dangerous. It is uncertain."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn said:  "You say the Bible says, "But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." This mind and Zen mind are the same, but if you are attached to words, then you don't understand the true meaning. What is the kingdom of God? These words make opposites—I am here, the kingdom of God is over there.

"Next you say, "These things shall be added unto you." Again, this is opposites thinking.

"Finally it says, "Take therefore no thought for tomorrow." Don't make tomorrow—then enough. "Tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself"—this is not necessary. Then tomorrow is tomorrow; just now is just now. This quotation says don't think about tomorrow, but there is already thinking about tomorrow. It is already a mistake to say tomorrow will take care of itself. If you keep a clear mind moment to moment to moment, then also when tomorrow comes, and the day after tomorrow, and next year, and the time when you die, you will have no problem.

"So, many Christian people are attached to words. But, the true meaning of this Bible quotation is that the seeking mind is the kingdom of God. Then God and you become one. Then your eyes, your ears, your nose, your tongue, your body, and your mind are God's eyes, God's ears, God's nose, God's tongue, God's body, and God's mind. There is no tomorrow, no yesterday; each moment is already complete. No tomorrow, no yesterday; each moment is already complete."



Making Saraswati statue for ceremony, Janakpur, Nepal

**V.99**
**Your true devotee rises above Brahma and Vishnu;**
**(Their consorts Saraswati and Laxmi want to play with him.)**
**Looks better than Kama, lord of Desire, attracting his wife Rati.**
**But always remembering only You, he is beyond these low games,**
**Fully immersed in absolute bliss: Knower-of-Absolute-Brahman.**

Continuously full of devotion – waking, dreaming, sleeping – The Seeker becomes a rival of the gods, but is unmoved by their attractions. After all, even the gods are mortal. As we come into this world of name and form, led by Prana and Kama, so we go out, led by Kama and Prana. The cycle completes, the wheel turns. We walk clearly in this wonderful world of names and forms, celebrating each and every moment, acting from the still center of the wheel. Silence expresses stillness. An empty glass has form – the form appears to contain space; there is an illusion of "inside" and "outside". Break the illusion, escape the "box". Out of silence, we bring joy into this world. In joy, we cannot be other than loving beings, in the present, beyond the snares of past and future.

About 27 min. into Lecture 1, Swami Rama says: *"If you do not know how to live with yourself, how do you expect yourself to live with others? If you are not at peace with yourself, how can you have a peaceful home? If you do not love yourself, or appreciate and admire yourself, how can you expect admiration from others? The prince of dreams who comes down and one day takes them and accepts as a wife -- every girl dreams. Same thing happens with boys. A day will come I'll meet some fair lady who will establish my home and give me love…. It never happens."*

"Zen Master Seung Sahn said: "Next, what is Zen? Zen means don't-know mind becomes clear. So, to sit means to make meditation; meditation becomes samadhi. Zen means when don't-know mind becomes clear, then cognition appears, and cognition becomes wisdom. Then sitting Zen means samadhi and wisdom."

"But those are all teaching words. If you are attached to these words, you will have a problem. Put it all down. Only go straight—don't know. Don't make anything. Don't check anything. Then you will get everything."



**V.100**
**I offer You the ceremony of the lighted lamp, no more than reflecting the light of the sun back to the sun,**
**I offer You the ceremony of moonstone drops, no more than returning the nectar which was given by the moon,**
**I offer You the ceremony of water, no more than returning the water that was gifted by the ocean,**
**I offer You, Source of all Sound, this hymn of praise, no more than returning the words that were gifted by You.**

This is the last verse of Saundaryalahari. At this point, better to say nothing…but the mouth still opens. Existing in silence and coming from the still center -- sing, don't sing, spout poetry, open your mouth to the falling rain, close your mouth, bask in the warm light of the sun, wash the dishes, just sit, don't comment, be truly human. All true teachings dissolve into silence and love –

17 minutes into Lecture 3, Swami Rama says: *"Direct knowledge means when you come in touch with your intuitive knowledge -- the infinite library within you -- then you are using that knowledge for which you do not need any evidence, any support. In mathematics 2 and 2 make 4. We do not need anyone's advice in that. Intuitive knowledge is that knowledge which helps you to decide, judge, discriminate, sharpen your Buddhi [wisdom mind] so that you don't have any doubt. You don't need any transmission from any source -- you don't need any support from anyone. That is beyond your mind, it means that when you calm down your mind -- that perfect understanding with the mind -- then you receive that knowledge, that knowledge starts from there."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn says: "You said all the wondering about correct teachings, various gurus and masters bothers you. What are you? If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. Always and everywhere, this don't-know mind is better than a Zen Master, better than Buddha. If you want the true way, this is already a mistake….Any religion cannot help you. Moment to moment, how you keep just-now mind is very important. Put it all down; only go straight—don't know. Then this don't know has already cut all thinking, is before all thinking. Then your mind is clear like space. If your mind is clear like space, it is clear like a mirror. Red comes; there is red; white comes; there is white. Only just like this. When you see the sky, only blue; when you see the tree, only green. There is no subject, no object, no inside, no outside. Inside and outside become one, so the sky is blue; the tree is green; just like this is truth. This truth you already have, but if you make something, you lose your way. So don't make anything; then you will get everything. So I say to you: Only go straight—don't know! Don't know is better than Buddha, better than God, better than all Zen Masters, better than everything."

A Footnote about my teachers:

**William Ptaszynski**

At a point in my life when I woke up enough to decide to follow my heart, I was in my third year at UC Santa Barbara. The year was 1963. I dropped my rat psychology major and entered the Fine Arts Department. Beginning Color and Design was taught by Bill Ptaszynski. Our semester's assignment was to collect a natural object and buy a book called *Science and Human Values* by Jacob Bronowski. I worked with a lobster tail found on the beach, using line, color, shape etc. over and over. At the same time we outlined each of the book's three chapters over and over. Each iteration revealed new facets, and what I thought was the known universe expanded endlessly.

**The Potters Wheel**

**Kathro Boaz**

I moved to Ojai, CA in 1969. Kathro Boaz was my neighbor across the street and taught yoga. At that time, I thought "yoga" was a set of physical exercises with a mystical flavor. I had seen photos of yogis in extreme positions when I was very young, and taught myself to sit in lotus pose. Kathro taught gentle asanas, giving importance to the breath and circular breathing. I don't know where she learned it, but in retrospect it was probably from a student of Krishnamacharya. She showed me that "yoga" was more than physical exercise.

**Zen Master Seung Sahn (Soen Sa Nim)**

In 1979, I put up a tipi at the new Ojai Foundation in Southern California, where I was one of the first staff members. It was the simplest and most beautiful house I have lived in, lit by sun in the day and moon at night. The OF then was 40 acres of undeveloped land, with a small trailer occupied by Director Joan Halifax (now Roshi of the Upaya Foundation in Santa Fe, NM), and a large tipi which was used for weekend workshops. The first (or almost first) program held in the tipi was a three-day Zen Sesshin with Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn (Soen Sa Nim). That is where I learned how to sit with spine, neck and head aligned for three full days. Any other position was too painful! Soen Sa Nim really liked the tipi: "Very nice house – one-pointed!". His teaching went directly to eliminating the obstacle of the mind and going beyond it. He emphasized over and over: "Keep only-don't-know mind!". He never said "no mind", but through stories and interviews and a lot of sitting helped his students to remove the coloring of samskaras, fantasies of the future, phantoms of the past, and checking the mind and feelings – all the well-known obstacles that make up the veils that obscure reality. Towards the end of the third day, silence occurred. The inner and outer worlds were seamlessly present, revealed just as it is.

**Swami Rama**

I was introduced to Swami Rama by my (now) wife. She met him in Nepal in 1981, when he was looking for land for Hansda Ashram. I met him in 1983, when I was in Nepal for 6 months. We would go to visit him most Saturdays. He knew I wanted to help potters in Nepal. In February 1984, he told us to get married, and within three days he had arranged for Dr. Usharbud Arya, now Swami Veda, to conduct the ceremony. I

ended up in Nepal for ten years as Team Leader of Ceramics Promotion Project, which successfully got glazed ceramics production started in Nepal, now a good business for several hundred people.

Swami Rama knew I practiced Zen meditation, and never suggested I should do anything else. He also got me started on this Saundaryalahari project.

**Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati**

I met Swami J. in 2006. I had been teaching Hatha Yoga and meditation for several years, but had gaps in my knowledge and practice. I went back to studying Swami Rama's writings, participated in several Yoga Intensives with Swami J. in Rishikesh, and did months of serious retreat. Many loose parts were assembled, and interpreting Saundaryalahari two times ended in dissolving all the words and practices into the simplicity that I already knew.

**The Sources I used for Saundaryalahari research and practice:**

The main source was Swami Rama's Saundaryalahari video series, available on youtube.
http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=61035752268BE45B&search_query=swamiramahimalayas
As always, Swami Rama teaches the direct practice, the "shortest cut", without the cultural attachments of Shankara's poetry. In Shankara's time, Sanskrit poetry used conventions that were easily understood and appreciated by the educated spiritual elite. In our western minds, we don't have that information, so need a different kind of teaching. Because I was interested in how Swami Rama distilled his teachings from the verses, I played "whodunit", investigating the symbolism of the hindu deities, and the inner meaning of Shankara's words, attempting to go from complexity back to simplicity and the essential practice. How does each verse refer to what Swami Rama is teaching?

Reference books used to research this interpretation were mainly two: Hindu Polytheism by Alain Danielou, which was extremely helpful in unraveling the references to Hindu deities, and taking them back to the core practice; and Swami Tapasyananda's commentary which presents a practical view of the meaning of the verses. He was a practitioner familiar with Shri Vidya.

Nataraj Guru's commentary was sometimes useful for deciphering specific words or lines, but I found his commentary forced, in the sense that he tried to abstract the poetry into a matrix that I personally did not relate to. He was also a practitioner.
Translations available on line by Norman Brown and Ramachander, without commentary, were not much help, and very awkward English.

Internet searches were also helpful to clarify some of the terminology.

Here are the specific references. The biographical information is mainly from Wikipedia:
**The Myths and Gods of India: The Classic Work on Hindu Polytheism from the Princeton Bollingen Series (Paperback)**
by Alain Daniélou (Author)
**Paperback:** 512 pages

**Publisher:** Inner Traditions (December 1, 1991)
**ISBN-10:** 0892813547
**ISBN-13:** 978-0892813544
**Alain Daniélou** (Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris, 4 October 1907–Lonay Switzerland, 27 January 1994) was a French historian, intellectual, musicologist, Indologist, and a noted western convert to and expert of Shaivite Hinduism.
His mother, Madeleine Clamorgan, was from an old family of the Norman nobility; a fervent Catholic, she founded a religious order for women teachers in civilian costume under the patronage of St. François-Xavier. His father, Charles Daniélou, was an anticlerical Breton politician who held numerous national ministerial posts. One of his brothers was Roman Catholic prelate and Académie Française member, Jean Daniélou. The young Daniélou studied singing under the famous Charles Panzéra, as well as classical dancing with Nicholas Legat (teacher of Vaslav Nijinsky), and composition with Max d'Olonne.

He and his partner, Swiss photographer fr:Raymond Burnier, first went to India as part of an adventure trip, and they were fascinated with the art and culture of the nation. Daniélou was one of the first Westerners to visit India's famed erotic temples in the village of Khajuraho. His stunning photographs of the ancient temple complex launched the site internationally. The first-ever photo exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum were those of Khajuraho taken by Daniélou.
But his more important contribution to Indology is his writings on the ancient wisdom of the Veda, Hindu philosophy, and Shaivism.
In 1949, Daniélou was appointed professor at the Hindu University of Benares and director of the College of Indian Music.
He is the author of over thirty books on Indian music and culture. He received several awards for his work on music. He was also a photographer and painter. He studied Indian classical music in Varanasi with Shivendranath Basu and played the veena. He also translated some of the works of Swami Karpatri by whom he was initiated into Shaivism under the name Shiva Sharan (Protected by Shiva). He is perhaps best remembered for his important work on classical Indian music.
He was an Officer of the Légion d'Honneur, an Officer of the Ordre National du Mérite, and Commander of Arts and Letters. He was the director of the UNESCO Collection series, a series of recordings of traditional world music. In 1981, he received the UNESCO/CIM prize for music, and, in 1987 the Kathmandu Medal from UNESCO.
**Alain Danielou's teacher: Swami Karpatri** (Swāmi Karpātrī; 1905-1980; born as Har Narayan Ojha in a village called Ojhawali in Barhalganj town area of Gorakhpur district in eastern Uttar Pradesh, India) was a monk in the Hindu dashanami monastic tradition. His ordained name as a monk was Hariharananda Saraswati, but he was popularly known by the name *Karpatri* ("he who uses his hand as a food vessel") Swami. He was married and the father of a baby daughter when he left home at age 17 to seek ordination as a sannyasi (monk). After his years of learning, including three years in icy caves in the Himalaya, he was ordained as a monk. He was the pupil of the very famous Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath Swami Brahmananda Swaraswati. He was also the founder of Dharma Sangha in Varanasi. He spent most of his life at Varanasi. He was a teacher in the Advaita Vedanta tradition of Hindu philosophy. In 1948, he founded the Ram Rajya Parishad, a traditionalist Hindu party. He also guided Alain Daniélou, a noted French indologist into converting into Hinduism under the name, *Shiv Sharan*. Swami Karpatriji was the most popular teacher of Advaita Vedanta in Varanasi in his lifetime. He was also the great expert of Shree Vidya and probably all the present day experts in Varanasi have somehow or the other obtained Shree vidya from him or his pupils. There

are some tales that he was a siddha purush. His certain pupils include Swami Nischalananda Swaraswati the present shankaracharya of Puri as well as Swami Chinmayananda Swaraswati the present Shankaracharya of Varanasi.
Link to Swami Rama: Here is what Swami Rama says about meeting Swami Brahmananda Saraswati in "Living with the Himalayan Masters": "Swami Brahmananda was one of the rare Siddhas who had the knowledge of Sri Vidya. His authoritive knowledge of the Upanishads, and especially of Shankara's commentaries, was superb. He was also a very good speaker. Swami Karpatri, a renowned scholar, was the disciple who requested him to accept the prestige and dignity of Shankaracharya in the North, a seat which had been vacant for 300 years. Whenever he travelled from one city to another, people flocked in the thousands to hear him, and after
his nomination as Shankaracharya, his followers increased. One thing very attractive about his way of teaching was his combination of the bhakti and Advaita systems. During my brief stay with him, he also talked about Madhusudana's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Swami Brahmananda had a Sri Yantra made out of rubies, and as he showed it to me, he explained the way he worshipped it. It is interesting to note how the great sages direct all their spiritual, mental and physical resources toward their ultimate goal. Among all the swamis of India, I only met a few who radiated such brilliance and yet lived in the public, remaining unaffected by worldly temptations and distractions. I stayed with him only a week and then left for Uttarkashi.'

**Saundaryalahari of Sankaracarya ; The Upsurging Billow of Beauty of Sankaracarya (Paperback)**
by Nataraja Guru (Author)
**Paperback:** 570 pages
**Publisher:** D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. (February 2, 2005)
**ISBN-10:** 8124603677
**ISBN-13:** 978-8124603673

**Nataraja Guru** (Dr. P Natarajan) was a direct disciple of Narayana Guru, a great sage and social reformer of India. Nataraja Guru founded *Narayana Gurukulam*, a worldwide contemplative community based on the teachings of Narayana Guru. He translated into English and wrote commentaries on all the major works of Narayana Guru. He has also written on a wide variety of subjects, employing throughout a protolinguistic or structural approach which could be said to be his unique contribution to the perennial wisdom-heritage of mankind.
Nārāyana Guru (1855 - 1928), also known as Sree Nārāyana Guru Swami, was a saint, sage, prophet and social reformer of India. The Guru was born into an Ezhava family, in an era when people from backward communities like the Ezhavas faced much social injustices in the caste-ridden Kerala society. *Gurudevan*, as he was fondly known to his followers, revolted against casteism and worked on propagating new values of freedom in spirituality and of social equality, thereby transforming the Kerala society and as such he is adored as a prophet.
Nārāyana Guru is revered for his *Vedic* knowledge, poetic proficiency, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy and his unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs. Nārāyana Guru was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundations for social reform in today's Kerala and was one of the most successful social reformers who tackled caste in India. He demonstrated a path to social emancipation without invoking the dualism of the oppressed and the oppressor.

Sree Vidyadhiraja Parama Bhattaraka Chattampi Swamikal (1853-1924) was a Hindu sage and social reformer. Swamikal along with his contemporary Nārāyana Guru, strived

to reform the heavily ritualistic and caste-ridden Hindu society of the late 19th century Kerala.

Chattampi Swamikal denounced the Brahminical interpretation of Hindu texts citing sources from the Vedas. Swamikal also worked for the emancipation of women and encouraged them to come to the forefront of society . He said that the enslavement of women was a manifestation of male arrogance. Swamikal promoted vegetarianism and professed non-violence (Ahimsa). He strongly opposed Christian missionary activities and criticized Christianity. He authored several books on spirituality and the history of language.

**Saundarya Lahari of Sri Sankaracarya (Paperback)**
by Shankara (Author), Translated by Swami Tapasyananda (Author)
**Paperback:** 181 pages
**Publisher:** Vedanta Press & Bookshop; First edition (June 1, 1987)
**ISBN-10:** 8171202446
**ISBN-13:** 978-8171202447
**Swami Tapasyananda** was a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was a disciple of Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, one of the eminent disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.[1] The Swami was a vice-president of the Ramakrishna Order from 1985-1991. He was an erudite scholar in Indian and Western philosophy. He has to his credit many books in English, including the translations of many scriptures. His translation of Srimad Bhagavatam in four volumes has been highly acclaimed in intellectual and devotional circles. He was the president of Ramakrishna Math, Chennai from 1971-1991. Swamiji was well-known for his austere life and intuitive intellect. He was a prolific writer. Some of the books authored by him are listed below. He translated a lot of Hindu classics into English from original Sanskrit.

**Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa** (February 18, 1836 - August 16, 1886), born **Gadadhar Chattopadhyay** is a famous mystic of 19th-century India. His religious school of thought led to the formation of the Ramakrishna Mission by his chief disciple Swami Vivekananda -- both were influential figures in the Bengali Renaissance and the Hindu renaissance during 19th and 20th century. He was considered an *avatar* or incarnation of God by many of his disciples, and is considered as such by many of his devotees today. Ramakrishna was born in a poor Brahmin Vaishnava family in rural Bengal. He became a priest of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, dedicated to goddess Kali, which had the influence of the main strands of Bengali bhakti tradition. His first spiritual teacher was an ascetic woman skilled in Tantra and Vaishnava *bhakti*. Later an *Advaita Vedantin* ascetic taught him non-dual meditation, and according to Ramakrishna, he experienced Nirvikalpa Samadhi under his guidance. Ramakrishna also experimented with other religions, notably Islam and Christianity, and said that they all lead to the same God. Though conventionally uneducated, he attracted attention of the Bengali intelligentsia and middle class.

Swami Brahmananda was a disciple of Ramakrishna, so Tapasyananda is linked to Danielou through him.

The Ramakrishna movement was brought to the West by Swami Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna movement has been termed as one of the revitalization movements of India.

Ramakrishna's relationship to Shri Vidya: Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa considered his body as the great Yantra. He praised Shakti as 'I am the device and you are the operator'.

*The Saundaryalahari; or, Flood of Beauty* — traditionally ascribed to Sankaracarya, edited and translated by W. Norman Brown (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).
Here I used the online publication:
http://www.Shaktisadhana.org/Newhomepage/sadhana/PDFfiles/Saundaryalahari.pdf

I also referred to Ramachander's translation, online at:
http://www.swamij.com/saundaryalahari.htm